





THE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT  
OF SCHOOLGIRLS



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*The* CORPORAL  
PUNISHMENT  
*of* SCHOOLGIRLS

*A Documentary Survey*

*by Margaret Stone*



A Wildfire Club Edition

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# *Foreword*

## *By Miss Marianne Martindale*

IT IS often supposed that schoolgirls have never, or only very rarely been subject to corporal punishment. Here, at last is a book that puts the record straight with precise facts and figures. A survey carried out by the Inner London Education Authority's inspectors as late as 1976-77, shows that one girl was caned, on average, each day of the school year in that authority's schools alone, and 18.4%—almost one in five—of the girls were caned at least once. Before abolition nearly six out of every ten Scottish schoolgirls were strapped. In certain states of America the paddling of schoolgirls—even as old as seventeen and eighteen—is still commonplace, and in some areas it is on the increase.

Girls, it is true, are treated more leniently on the whole than boys, being caned less often, sometimes with lighter implements and usually on the hands rather than the seat: though as one who has considerable experience of the corporal punishment of consenting older females I can testify that punishments on the hand are hardly an instance of lenity. They are generally considered, by those who have experience of both, much more severe than punishments on the seat and most girls, given a choice of, say, two on the hands or four on the seat would gratefully opt for the latter.

The question of discipline in schools is, of course, much broader than the question of corporal punishment. The current fashion among educational 'experts' and the chattering classes in general is to disparage all forms of discipline, mental and moral as well as physical (though curiously, physical discipline—often severe—in the form of dieting, exercise and general health-faddery is the only kind that retains any credit among some such people). The objection to corporal punishment is merely a particular (and especially intense) instance of this general objection to discipline.

In the 1950s a friend of mine read a Victorian novel in which a letter was written to a lady by her housekeeper. The housekeeper was obviously an intelligent woman for her class, but the letter was littered with spelling mistakes and grammatical solecisms of a sort

that would shame any eleven-plus candidate. The letter read quaintly in the 1950s because it was very much a period-piece. No one of that intelligence, in those times of good-quality universal education, whatever her social background, would write a letter of that sort. People were educated now.

Forty years later the wheel has come full circle. People of that class and intelligence, despite—or perhaps partly because of—ten years of compulsory child-centred education, write letters of precisely that sort. They cannot spell, they cannot construct a sentence, they have only the most rudimentary, and often wildly inaccurate, notions of the function of punctuation marks, the grammar of their native language and the distinction between those words and phrases which belong to formal written English and those which are only appropriate to casual conversation. They have been instructed—or rather not instructed—by teachers who have themselves been taught that punctuation, grammar and spelling do not matter and that the only important thing is that children learn to ‘express themselves’—or not learn, since ‘self-expression’ is supposed to come ‘naturally’. The result is that ‘express themselves’ is precisely what they cannot do—at least on paper. Talk to any one of them and she may seem quite intelligent; receive a letter from her and it is difficult to believe that it has emanated from the same person. It appears to be from a near-idiot. We do not exaggerate. We have seen countless letters of this sort, and so has any one who receives correspondence from people under thirty below university level.

The sad truth is that, whereas in the 1950s almost any reasonably intelligent person could write creditable English, in the 1990s that ability has reverted back to being the privilege of a small élite—the few, mostly middle-class (but by no means including all the middle class), who are intelligent enough to educate themselves despite the system, or who are sent to private schools run on more traditional lines, or whose family environment, rather than school, provides the main backbone of their education. The masses have reverted to semi-literacy.

Nevertheless, there is a great difference between the cultural state of the semi-literate Victorian housekeeper and that of the semi-literate Comprehensive School victim. Early in this century

W.B. Yeats conducted a survey into the popular performance of Shakespeare in the British Isles. In the 19th century and before, Shakespeare had been avidly followed by people of all classes—one will remember Sibyl Vane in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* who played, in a terrible flea-pit theatre to the most plebeian of audiences, a mixture of cheap melodrama and Shakespeare, both of which packed them in. This was entirely true to life. Shakespeare appealed deeply to the romantic imagination of the English of every class. However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, popular performance of Shakespeare declined sharply, and what Yeats discovered was that this decline followed exactly the introduction of compulsory board-school education. Where the board schools were introduced, the repertory companies found within a decade or two that they could no longer profitably perform Shakespeare. Where it was introduced later, Shakespeare performance declined that much later, and where it had not yet been introduced at all, Shakespeare performance was still alive and healthy.

The prosaic, factual, materialistic preoccupations of modern education are in a great measure inimical to the romantic imagination and to depth of soul. The person who has been compulsorily educated for many years may gain much, but she will also lose much\*. We should never lose sight of the fact that in subjecting a child to compulsory education—even the very best compulsory education—we are not giving a pure gift. We are giving something *and* taking something; and it behoves us to be very sure that what we are giving is greater and more valuable than what we are taking.

What, then, *are* the lasting benefits of education? What does a person who has been formally educated feel she has gained in comparison to one who has not? Nancy Mitford in her semi-autobio-

\* “Universal compulsory education, of the type introduced at the end of the last century, has not fulfilled expectations by producing happier and more effective citizens; on the contrary, it has created readers of the yellow press and cinema-goers”. Karl Otten quoted in Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Bugbear of Literacy*, Perennial books. Mr. Otten, writing in the 1940s, could hardly have envisaged the depth of cultural degeneration that was to take place in the following half-century. Beside the 1990s Comprehensive product, his cinema-goers and yellow press readers would seem gentlemen scholars of the old school.



graphical novel *The Pursuit of Love* sets the experience of a girl who has been to school against that of her close friends who have not. Here we are enabled to consider the simple value of schooling itself by comparing children with every educational advantage *except* that of formal schooling with a girl whose background in every way similar except that she has been to school:

The Radlett children read enormously by fits and starts in the library at Alconleigh, a good, representative, nineteenth-century library, which had been made by their grandfather, a most cultivated man. But, while they picked up a great deal of heterogeneous information and gilded it with their own originality, while they bridged gulfs of ignorance with their charm and high spirits, they never acquired any habit of concentration, they were incapable of solid hard work. One result, in later life, was that they could not stand boredom. Storms and difficulties left them unmoved, but day after day of ordinary existence produced an unbearable torture of ennui, because they completely lacked any form of mental discipline.

The very foundation of late-20th-century 'child-centred' education is to exclude any form of mental discipline. Children are to be coaxed, wheedled and passively\* 'interested' in their work. The symptoms of the Radlett children will be recognised as *exactly* those of the modern Comprehensive child. Boredom, lack of concentration, a craving for easy stimulation (to which the ever-cruder outpourings of the mass-media shamelessly pander). In other words, the effect of modern schooling on the moral and mental constitution is precisely the same as the effect of no schooling at all. The average modern school-child, in return for all that school robs her

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\* The term 'passive' here is used in the light of the traditional conception of the Passive Life. The two legitimate modes of life accepted by traditional societies everywhere are the Contemplative Life and the Active Life. The Contemplative Life, or *bios theoretikon* is the higher and more arduous of the two. The Active Life, of which the *Bhagavad Gita* is perhaps the most thoroughgoing classical apologia and exposition, is the life of those who perform the world's work in the light of spiritual and intellectual principles. The Passive life is the existence of the ignorant who are merely pushed this way and that by their animal desires and aversions—and thus, of course, by those who know how to manipulate those desires and aversions. These people are, in Hamlet's words, "passion's slaves", *passion* and *passivity* being closely related terms both etymologically and philosophically.

of in terms of freedom, individuality and imaginative life, receives practically nothing. Her mind is not disciplined or toned; her ability to take intelligent, disciplined interest in things is by no means stimulated and may often have been killed, and she cannot even write a letter.

Corporal punishment is not the issue here. The issue is discipline in its most rudimentary sense. If schools have abandoned the notion of discipline, then it is time we abandoned *them*, for without it they have nothing whatever to give. Children can learn more and develop better left to themselves. Ten years in a modern State school is ten years of hell for a sensitive child. Ten years being force-fed with grubby cynicism, sexual prurience and cheap political ideology. In those ten years a child loses her innocence, her charm, her fearless confidence in life, her imagination, her love of beauty, her sense of adventure, her sense of honour, her freshness and her depth.

What does she gain in return?

Returning to the specific topic of corporal punishment: we find a case reported in this book of a girl who was afraid to go to school because she faced a caning. The case must have been rare enough, since it is the only one of the kind in the published collections of the anti-corporal-punishment lobby which have been extensively drawn upon by the author of this book. If such fears were commonplace we can be sure that the propagandists of this lobby and of the mass-media in general (the two are scarcely distinguishable) would have made hay with them. As it is, the case is played for all its emotional impact.

We mention this because it is typical of the disingenuousness of this type of propaganda. For every one child who thus lived in fear of corporal punishment, there were and still are hundreds who live in fear of bullying. Very few school teachers act with truly sadistic intentions—and those few can and should be dealt with. *Schoolchildren*, on the other hand, frequently do. No one will ever know the number of children for whom every walk to and from school is made a nightmare by bullying and the fear of bullying; who watch the schoolroom clock towards the end of the school day not with anticipation of freedom but with dread of the ordeal

ahead. If the terrorisation and pain suffered by children were of real interest to the anti-corporal-punishment-lobby, then they would have paid at least some cursory attention to this problem which causes far more suffering—and far more *prolonged* suffering, and far more *intense* suffering—than corporal punishment ever has, especially under the moderate régimes that have been in force throughout this century with their philosophy of more or less ‘last-resort’ deterrence.

If they *had* given even a moment’s serious thought to this form of suffering, they would also consider the possibility that the most effective deterrent from bullying is corporal punishment. In many schools before the abolition of corporal punishment, bullying was one of the very few offences that merited the cane, and since that time it is generally admitted that bullying and playground violence have increased alarmingly. We do not claim that these two facts are necessarily related as cause and effect. We *do* insist that at the very least a certain proportion, and probably a very considerable proportion, of bullying could be curtailed if those in authority had at their disposal a serious sanction against it. Many teachers freely admit that in the face of determined bad behaviour they are now just about helpless. With the moderate or sporadic bully the teacher may hope to have some influence, but with the really hardened and vindictive case she can do nothing.

I ask the reader to consider the feelings of a child who has been hurt and terrorised for months by a school bully and who, when the bully is finally brought to ‘justice’ hears him say swaggeringly to the teacher: “What do you think you’re going to do about it? What can you do to me?” and watches the teacher turn resignedly away, leaving the victim to her fate.

I do not say that these considerations should turn every abolitionist overnight into a supporter of corporal punishment. What I do say is that if there was an ounce of sincerity in the supposed compassion for children by which the abolitionists claim to be motivated, they would at least take pause and do some heart-searching; would at least openly weigh one evil against the other and admit that, whichever side they finally come down on, things are not quite as simple as they might wish. Have you ever heard an abolitionist,

or any one who follows the stock 'anti' line, pause for one moment? Do you imagine that you ever will? Of course not. Because the truth is that compassion plays no part whatever in their thinking. They are hard-line ideologues who care for atrocity stories only when they help their cause. For suffering that does not fit in with their pre-digested picture of the world they care nothing. They turn away from it with flint-hearted indifference.

The truth is that the anti-corporal punishment campaign has no more to do with kindness to children than the anti-fur campaign has to do with kindness to animals. Both are purely ideological movements, motivated by much the same ideology in each case. This is not, of course, to deny that the majority of innocent dupes of the propaganda honestly *believe* that they hold the views they do out of kindness. They have simply never thought about such questions as the suffering that might be *alleviated* by corporal punishment because that is no part of the propaganda that is fed to them. But those who do the feeding know well enough that they are selecting, sifting and slanting their facts. Suffering to them is not a cause for concern: it is a weapon in the propaganda war, and when it happens to fall on the wrong side of the fence—to make the wrong point—its victims, however unhappy and frightened, however young and innocent and bewildered, can never look to these people for a flicker of sympathy or even recognition.

Sorry, kid. Your nightmare doesn't tell the right story. Turn instead to some unnatural little monster who wants to shop his own parents for a mild spanking. Now *he* deserves real sympathy

At the other extreme from the abolitionist fanatics stand a growing body of people who advocate corporal punishment in its most extreme and even brutal forms. The favourable reaction of many people to the case of the young American caned in Singapore, discussed in this book, is as disturbing to my mind as the totalitarian intolerance of the anti-corporal-punishment lobby.

The punishment in question was not a 'good caning' in the sense understood by those familiar with the English school tradition. It might better be described as an 'evil caning'. One which sends the victim into a state of medical shock and scars him for life. Perhaps

some of the people who applauded this punishment were *naïve* enough to believe that what was in question was simply an old-fashioned six of the best, and that such a caning would be a salutary punishment for a boy who wantonly damages other people's motor cars. Not, in my view, an unreasonable position.

The majority, however, must have known exactly what they were condoning. I am sure the mass-media made it clear enough often enough. I do not imbibe the late-20th-century propaganda services myself, but I am well aware of their tendencies and how they would report a case like this so as to get the maximum abolitionist bias on the issue. In this case they should have had no difficulty. It *was* brutal and hateful. The only bit of 'twisting' they needed to indulge in was subtly to imply that 'this is what corporal punishment really means'—which, of course, it is not. Corporal punishment can be, and in this country usually is, moderate, sane and decent. The job of those in favour of corporal punishment was to point out this latter fact and to make clear their utter abhorrence for brutality.

However, this was not what happened. Many people openly embraced the brutality, and it is worth our while to enquire why this should be.

In the 'respectable' mass-media there is virtually no place for a reasonable, intelligent statement of the pro-corporal-punishment argument. A case like the Singapore one is used by the broadcasting services in particular as a springboard for an orgy of one-sided abolitionist sentiment.

Under these circumstances it is less surprising that people who *know* something is wrong; who feel certain that more rather than less public discipline is needed; who are angry and frustrated at the total dominance of all organs of intelligent communication by authoritarian abolitionists, should rebel in a very simple and unsophisticated manner: "You say you don't approve of this caning—well we d—n well do."

Liberals are very good at understanding cruel and violent statements or acts as products of "legitimate anger and frustration"—when the anger and frustration is manifested by approved groups. It is time we understood that anger and frustration *do* exist, and they do not only exist where the modern mass-media establishment

wants them to be. The reaction of many people to the Singapore case is a frightening indication of the depth of violent feeling which is being contained like a time-bomb by the totalitarian one-sidedness of the broadcasting services and the better-class press.

I do not think we should underestimate the dangers of the harsh sentiments created by the total repression of one point of view. Until well into the early part of this century, the cat o' nine tails was used in this country to tear the flesh from a man's back, much as was done in ancient Rome. Throughout most of human history, judicial corporal punishment of a sort which we can only call abominably cruel was in force and generally accepted. Perhaps such things are endemic in a masculine-dominated society, but in any case, we have not changed that much, as reaction to the Singapore case demonstrates. To the short-sighted a return to such barbarities may seem out of the question; but in truth, it would not take much to bring the wheel round.

That is why it is so dangerous to foster the extreme polarity between the blanket censorship exercised by the anti-corporal-punishment lobby, at present arrogantly in power, and the increasingly violent reaction of those who are coming to favour corporal punishment and who, by being denied intelligent spokesmen and reasonable arguments, are reduced to barbaric grunts.

Violent swings from one extreme to the other are by no means rare in history, and, on the issue of corporal punishment, as on many other issues, the swaggering intolerance of those in power; their unnatural (and fraudulent) co-option of the simultaneous rôles of tyrant and 'rebel', thus denying their opponents any rôle at all; their complete refusal to let the other side of the case be even heard, may be stoking up a terrible reaction.

There may be a return to corporal punishment, whether we want it or not. And if there is, we must do everything in our power to ensure that it is a measured, intelligent, humane and decent corporal punishment that is returned to. The only way there can be a chance of that is for the reasonable voice of corporal punishment to be allowed back into public life. The 'pro' case must not be restricted to the barbaric yawp of the yellow press and the immoderate sentiments of a frustrated people.

Between the extremes of blinkered, dogmatic abolitionism and punitive vindictiveness, there is a broad, civilised middle ground. If we are to find that middle ground, there must be free and open discussion of all points of view. There must be an end to the pious censorship of intelligent debate. It may well be that thus, and thus only, can a new era of barbarism be avoided.

On the general question, implicitly raised by this book, as to whether a re-introduction of corporal punishment in general would be a good thing, I must confess myself uncertain. There are numerous people, it seems, who imagine it would be a cure for many of the besetting ills of the late 20th century. I doubt it. I have no qualms about stating my belief that in a sane, healthy society, corporal punishment can and should play a rôle in maintaining order and training the young. But late-20th-century Britain—and the Western world in general—can hardly be called a sane, healthy society.

Discipline is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end. The purpose of discipline is to encourage conformity to standards of conduct, honour, neatness, and purpose. Does the late 20th century possess such standards? Has the anarchic, self-centred pop-culture promulgated alike by the mass media and the politicians the moral right to impose itself on children or any one else, by physical discipline or any other means?

Put thus baldly, one can only answer with an unequivocal no.

Yet perhaps it is not quite so simple. The retreat from discipline and the malaise of the late 20th century can be said to have a common cause—a fundamental confusion about values. A schoolmistress recently said to a friend of mine that she felt she could not teach even the most elementary moral values to her class. She would not even tell them not to steal because: “Some of them might come from backgrounds with a different ethical attitude to stealing.” What this means, I suppose, is that children from working-class homes or foreign cultures are imagined to think it acceptable to steal things. My friend’s retort was unanswerable:—“Just try stealing something from one of these children or from their families and you will soon see how ‘different’ their ethics are.” Of course there has always been an irrational tendency among the more

childish members of any section of the community (including 'gentlemen thieves') to think that stealing is acceptable when *they* do it, but never, of course, when it is done to them. To glorify such attitudes as 'different ethics' is absurd. To point out their essential wrongness by reason where possible and by punishment where necessary is and always has been the essence of moral education.

The attitude expressed by this schoolmistress is at once a gross slur on people from backgrounds other than white middle class ones and a truly reprehensible abdication of responsibility.

They are not, of course, her personal opinions. They, and others like them, are being expressed by teachers up and down the country and throughout the Western world, often without those who give voice to them pausing for a moment to consider the real meaning and implication of the words. Those truly responsible for these irresponsible sentiments are the mass-media and the teachers' training colleges which inculcate them relentlessly, day in and day out, year in and year out, without the smallest concern for their terrible consequences.

There is, as this book shows, a reaction. A schoolmistress of my acquaintance tells me that as discipline breaks down in her school and classes become increasingly unmanageable, the nostrums of 'child-centred' education are being angrily rejected by teachers who, only a few years ago, were their staunchest advocates. She finds that she is now applauded for expressing opinions which a short time ago she would not have dared to speak aloud in the Staff Room.

Optimism, however, would be premature. I suspect that these teachers see through only those lies that they are forced to see through, while remaining obediently besotted with the rest. They would like, no doubt, to patch up somehow the extreme chaos into which their world is falling, but without restoring the moral and æsthetic bases for civilised life, is it possible?

It is not, I think a coincidence that the community among which discipline is actually increasing and where it has the most positive effects is that of the fundamentalist Christians. The outstanding success of the ultra-severe régime of the Rebekah Home for Girls not only in reforming young female delinquents, but in rendering them "sociable and cheerful where they had previously been morose and



secretive” is something which I strongly suspect could not have been achieved by hard work, regimentation and punishment alone. Such a régime depends upon the creation of an alternative to the de-centred, value-free environment of the late 20th century. The ban on wireless, television, magazines and newspapers is, I am sure, a much more important aspect of the ‘cure’ than even the course organisers may realise. Girls are removed from the deracinating and morally de-stabilising influences of a culture gone wrong.

But that can only work if there is something to put in its place; some moral or philosophical basis upon which to re-build at least the rudiments of a social order. The Principal of the Home expects the girls to “emerge to live just like every one else”. In England or New York such a hope would be futile. The value-less vacuum of the surrounding ambience would rapidly encourage them to drift back into crime. The whole trouble with such girls is that they *do* live like every one else in the late 20th century—only just a bit more so. In Bible-belt Texas, however, where they are likely to emerge from their religious re-education into a church-community which will help and support them in their reformed lives, their chances are much higher and the Home’s claimed hundred-percent success-rate is less surprising\*.

I am not advocating Christian fundamentalism as the answer to the problems of the late 20th century. Biblical literalism does not appeal to me personally, nor does it seem either probable or desirable that the society of the future could be founded on a single, rather narrow, faith. But there is a need for a return to shared values and norms, as much cultural and æsthetic as moral and ethical.

Corporal punishment is not going to work miracles among a generation that is being actively encouraged to listen to anarchic and suggestive music, to lose their innocence at the earliest possible

\* The authoress of this book is sceptical of the Home’s claimed 100% success rate. I am less so. After all, the Home’s opponents, who are many and powerful and have the ear of the mass-media, would have to find only *one girl* who had completed the course and returned to crime in order to refute the claim—while three or four would reduce it to ridicule. Presumably they have not been able to do so. A claim of a 95% or even a 99% success rate would be difficult if not impossible to refute. Only a fool would claim a full 100% success rate unless it were true.

opportunity, to wear fluorescent flour-bags instead of clothes. Such a generation can have no true self-respect, no sense of romance or beauty, no spiritual *fulness*. The imposition of corporal punishment under such circumstances to quell the worst excesses would be like putting a sticking-plaster on a sabre-wound.

What is needed, at the least, is a return to neatness and order; to agreed standards; to dignity and courtesy and kindness; to modesty and romance; to the things which make life worth living without recourse to ever cruder and uglier stimuli. In such a world, corporal punishment, intelligently employed, may have a part to play, but corporal punishment alone cannot bring about such a world, although I fully accept that the desire for a return of corporal punishment may, in many people, be a desire for the return of such a world and may even be a first faltering step toward it.

I shall be asked how I should bring about such a world. I can only reply that I am not a social reformer. I do not know how or whether such a world can be brought about. I do know that if it is not brought about there will be nothing to look forward to in the 21st century but a long, slow (and perhaps not so slow) slide into further degeneration and eventual social breakdown.

I would suggest that the only thing that can be done at present is for those who understand the position to disengage themselves as far as possible from the present state of things—to throw away their television sets and begin to build, among themselves, in miniature, a social order suitable for sane people to live in.

The only answer to the problem is a new and better way of life; and the first step toward that is for a courageous few to stop waiting for 'something to happen' outside themselves and to show the way forward by getting on and *living* it.

*Women interested in the disciplined female society mentioned at the beginning of this foreword may write to Miss Martindale C/O the Wildfire Club, B.M. Elegance, London W.C.1. (full address)*

# Introduction

*The Corporal Punishment of Schoolgirls*: the title alone raises more eyebrows, and more questions, than the entire contents of the average book of educational theory. Why on earth should a book be written about corporal punishment? Why of schoolgirls in particular? And why now, of all times, in these dying years of the twentieth century? Most European nations stopped beating schoolchildren long ago. Poland and Holland led the way in 1783 and 1820, while France gave it up in 1880. This century, Portugal abolished it in 1950; Sweden in 1958; and Denmark and Spain (then still under General Franco's ultra-conservative régime) in 1967. Traditionally-minded Switzerland, which only finally gave the vote to women in some cantons in the 1990s, gave up corporal punishment in 1970.

In the Anglo-Saxon world things came later but come they did—or at least so it appeared. Under pressure from 'Europe', the cane was abolished in state schools in mainland Britain at the end of the 'eighties; it was abolished in the largest province of Australia at the same time and in New Zealand in 1990; and in those years, one by one American cities and states began to abandon their chosen form of discipline, the 'paddle' in their schools. By the early 'nineties in Europe only the schools on the Isle of Man and a handful of traditional private schools in mainland Britain continued to administer corporal punishment to their pupils; and of these, the number of schools like Rodney School in Nottinghamshire which, at the time of writing, continues to cane girls, was even smaller.

## *Back from the grave?*

But what goes around, as they say, comes around. In 1992, King's Park School in Lancashire, opted out of state control and became the forty-fifth school in Britain to base its methods on the Bible-and-paddle American 'Christian Education' system. Less than two years later a report in the *Independent on Sunday* newspaper (I.O.S., 1st May 1994) estimated the number of these schools at around a hundred.

At the same time across the Atlantic, a Southern State which had imposed a moratorium on corporal punishment in its state schools overturned its earlier decision and took the unprecedented step of reintroducing the paddle.

### ***Support for the caning of criminals in the U.S.A.***

Most telling of all, perhaps, was what happened in 1994 when American teenager Anthony Fay was sentenced to a remarkably brutal caning in Singapore for acts of petty vandalism. The punishment was undoubtedly out of all proportion with his crime (and indeed, it is questionable whether there is any crime at all which would be in proportion with a beating which fillets flesh and leaves the victim scarred for life) and yet a huge proportion of public opinion in the U.S.A.—variously 55%, 63% and 59%, depending on which poll you choose to believe—came out in favour of it. Speaking on television news the young woman interviewed by B.B.C. reporters seemed to sum up the sea-change in the nation's attitudes: "If we had that kind of punishment here," she said, "we wouldn't be in the mess we're in now."

A year later the groundswell of public opinion put corporal punishment back on the political agenda again. Following the Republican take-over of Congress, the move to restore judicial corporal punishment began to gain momentum. By the beginning of 1995, nine state legislatures were considering introducing caning and other corporal punishments for offenders and more were set to follow. In California, six strokes of the paddle were proposed for graffiti vandals. Proposals for judicial caning were unveiled in New York State and Mississippi. In Tennessee, state delegates proposed to cane criminals in public on the courthouse steps, and to televise the event for those who are unable to attend. The trend is strongest in the rural Deep South, where people are increasingly affected by crimes previously associated with big cities, but it is spreading to areas previously considered to be 'liberal' in their outlook.

"The intent is to create fear in criminals," said Mr. Tom Cameron, a leading figure in the movement to restore corporal punishment and a Republican member of the Mississippi legislature.

"I look at Singapore and you can walk all around the streets. If

it works in Singapore, maybe it'll work here." Mississippi Governor Kirk Fordyce backed the move.

In reaction to claims by opponents that caning will be 'racist' and will hark back to the days of slavery, Mr. Cameron offered a compromise—to have the caning carried out by an American Indian, the most oppressed of oppressed minorities.

Although civil liberties activists say that caning violates the constitution, which bans 'cruel and unusual punishment', many scholars believe that the Supreme Court would rule in favour of the cane, given the concern about crime.

### ***Support for birching in Britain***

While it is unlikely that Britain will go as far as the U.S. in reintroducing the birch for young criminals in the foreseeable future, the same movement of public opinion is developing. In 1994, for example, a large section of the public and the media rallied behind Judge Owen Stable's lament for the passing of judicial corporal punishment. Sentencing three young car thieves who nearly killed a workman during a car-chase, he said that he was "fed up with the inability to deal adequately with seriously wicked behaviour." He went on to tell the youths:

"If you could be sentenced to be lashed, it would not only deter you but deter a lot of other young men. If any pusillanimous politicians have any doubt with regard to the deterrent effect of corporal punishment, let them look at the judicial system of Singapore and the effect the use of the cane there has had there in restricting crime. If I had a free hand in this country, had it not sold itself down the river to Europe, I would order each one of you to be flogged. I am, however, seriously restricted, happily for you, but unhappily for all law-abiding members of society."

A few days later, Britain's best-selling newspaper published the results of its reader survey on the subject under the headline "Flog 'em judge is so right say *Sun* readers". The reporter, Heather Lowrie, described how Judge Stable 'got massive backing' from the public. A selection of readers' comments were printed: Birmingham market trader Ray Morris described the judge as "the only judge in Britain in touch with what the public wants"; housewife Anne

Sharp said, "It should be like in Singapore, where they're not afraid to give someone a caning"; and young teacher Georgina Watford said, "We should bring back the cane or the belt. Kids nowadays don't have any respect. I have noticed it in my school. The law just isn't stiff enough."

In 1995, echoing Tennessee politicians' call for televised public beatings, the Conservative M.P. for Batley, Elizabeth Peacock, called for British criminals to be birched on prime-time television and, predictably, received the support of a growing and increasingly vocal section of the media and the public.

For more and more people in the crime-ridden societies of the Western world the pendulum has swung too far in favour of individual freedom and too far away from social order and, rightly or wrongly, growing numbers of these people see the reintroduction of corporal punishment in schools, and of the corporal and capital punishment of criminals, as a solution to many of Western society's ills. Punishment seems to have become fashionable again.

### ***Public concern and private discipline***

Outside the official structures of the Government and the school system there is a growing tendency for people to take the law into their own hands. In the U.S.A., far more money is spent each year on private security schemes than on official police forces. Newspapers report more and more cases of local vigilantes dispensing their own brand of 'justice' and Britain's *Sun*—always a shrewd judge of the spirit of the times—applauds them for it. And—to return from the broad and general to the subject of this book—if the schools aren't seen to give children the discipline their parents feel they need, people set up their own schools which *will*.

### ***The liberal establishment versus the new 'moral majority'***

All of this brings us to the point of the book. Punishment—and corporal punishment in particular—is an increasingly contentious issue, and there are two positions on the matter. The established liberal view is that it is an archaic barbarism which is never justified under *any* circumstances—even if, for example, it were to be shown

that it might actually lead to happier children getting better exam results in more well-ordered schools, or that it might lead to a lessening of the juvenile crime rate. Even the mere raising of the subject in anything other than a tone of condescending condemnation is taboo for these people.

The growing band of hangers and floggers, on the other hand, point to the contrast between crime-ridden modern Western cities and either Singapore today or Britain and America in the 'good old days', or both, as it takes their fancy, and blithely conclude that corporal punishment is an absolute necessity to restore social order and to prevent a headlong slide into anarchy. In doing so, these people ignore or brush aside all of the serious ethical pitfalls and opportunities for error and abuse that beset any system of corporal punishment both in theory and in practice.

The problem is that although there are strongly-held positions and disagreement between the two sides, there is no real *debate*.

### ***So why the corporal punishment of girls, then?***

There are many arguments for a book on corporal punishment; but this book focuses not on any kind of corporal punishment, nor on the punishment of juvenile delinquents or of schoolchildren generally, but specifically and deliberately on the physical punishment of young girls at school. If this seems an odd choice or an uncomfortable choice of subject, it is meant to be so. Of all of the aspects of corporal punishment, the punishment of girls—and particularly the punishment of adolescent girls—is most fraught with tension and controversy. In a male-dominated education system an air of unspoken awkwardness hangs over the entire subject, such that even hardened pro-floggers blush and grow strangely inarticulate when asked for their opinion on the matter.

It is this, the area of greatest controversy, that must be scrutinised the most thoroughly if the rôle of physical discipline as a whole is to be openly and honestly re-evaluated.

### ***A sense of unease***

The penal code of Singapore shows evidence of an unspoken sense of unease. While all males under the age of fifty are eligible for a

caning if they break the city's laws, females of any age are exempt, no matter how serious or how violent their crimes, and no matter how robust their state of health. In Britain, too, when birching was on the statute-books it was a wholly male punishment. When, in the middle years of this century, a Channel Islands legislature introduced birching for both sexes they were immediately overturned by a furious Westminster Parliament.

A case study illustrates the point: in the mid-1950s, the national newspapers reported the case of a teenage boy who was birched for having carnal relations with an under-age girl after the matter was reported to the police by the girl's irate father. The irony of it was that the girl, a few weeks from her sixteenth birthday, was almost a year *older* than the boy, and even the judge, in passing sentence, acknowledged that it was the girl who had been the prime instigator of the act.

In British schools the corporal punishment of girls has always been hedged about with more restrictions and caveats than that of boys: whether forbidding them to be beaten at all or specifying that a less severe implement be used or that girls be beaten across the hand rather than across the bottom: which is to say, across a non-sexual part of the body rather than across a sexual one.

One of the paradoxes of corporal punishment is that its supporters can provide case-study evidence to prove that it has improved discipline and performance in schools; whereas its opponents can provide similar evidence to prove that it has been a source of perverse sexual pleasure for many of those involved, particularly where men are allowed to inflict it on girls.

### ***Who this book is for***

The extremists of both camps will find evidence in this book to prove that they are right and everyone else is wrong; but the book is not intended for them. It is not intended to preach to the converted, whatever view they may be converted to. Rather it is for the vast majority of people who hover between the two extremes. It raises uncomfortable issues.

On the one hand, *what if* corporal punishment were to be reintroduced into British schools and into the non-spanking schools in



the liberal North of the U.S.A., much as it was in the 'seventies and 'eighties, and as it continues to be used in the Deep South and in private religious schools. In this case it asks what would be the *worst* one could expect, and whether anything could be done to prevent abuse of the system.

On the other hand, it asks *what if* it were to be abolished everywhere, to be replaced by 'sixties notions of liberal 'positive discipline'. In this case it points to the growing body of evidence to suggest that these methods, as they are currently used, just don't work. Again, it asks what is the worst one could expect.

Finally, it asks whether there might be a case for a restricted and regulated re-introduction of corporal punishment into schools.

# *Facts and Figures*

## *Corporal punishment in schools*

### ***Britain and the U.S.A. today***

Corporal punishment was banned in British state schools in 1989 under pressure from the European Court of Human Rights. It is still used in state schools in the Isle of Man, in a small number of traditional private schools on the mainland and in a growing number of independent religious schools.

In the U.S.A., corporal punishment is still widely used in state schools in the Southern states, particularly in rural areas.

### ***The legal basis for corporal punishment in Britain***

Teachers who lawfully administer corporal punishment to their pupils in British schools are judged to be acting *in loco parentis*. According to the legal textbooks, which quote a court judgement of 1860), authorised teachers are acting in the place of parents and have the same rights of punishment. These are that punishments are acceptable if they are carried out “for the purpose of correcting what is evil in the child”. They are within the law providing that they are not “for the gratification of passion or rage, immoderate in degree, protracted beyond the child’s powers of endurance or calculated to produce danger to life or limb.”

Since abolition in State schools, only teachers in private schools now have this authority.

### ***Britain before abolition***

A survey in 1977 revealed that virtually all of the 104 education authorities in England and Wales permitted corporal punishment on all classes of pupils. 18 authorities banned it for certain categories (usually infants). Inner London was alone in banning its use on the under-11s.

A number of authorities limited the number of teachers permitted to administer it (usually to heads and deputy heads); the type of implements used (most commonly a cane of approved pattern); the

parts of the body permitted to be beaten; and the types of offences for which corporal punishment could be used.

Thirty-six authorities had no regulations at all, other than the universal obligation to record all punishments in the school punishment book.

After a decline in the early '70s, a number of authorities began to re-introduce corporal punishment. Some small non-caning authorities such as Oxford and Basildon were absorbed into caning areas in the 1974 local government reorganisation. In 1976, the new authority of Avon reintroduced corporal punishment into Bristol infant schools for the first time since 1905. Gwynedd reintroduced corporal punishment for children in special schools.

Corporal punishment in Scottish schools was widespread and administered across the hands with a *tawse*, a traditional heavy leather strap divided at the end into two or three tails. Schools in Manchester and the North of England also favoured tawses rather than canes.

### ***England and Wales: three types of school.***

There were three distinct attitudes to corporal punishment in schools. Twenty percent of children in England and Wales went to schools where the cane was never used. A high proportion of girls-only schools were of this kind. The majority of children—some eighty percent of sixteen-year-olds, according to the National Child Development Study—went to schools where corporal punishment was used. Within most caning schools it was used very sparingly, as a last resort for the most serious offences. In a small minority of schools it was used regularly for everyday misbehaviour.

### ***Typical caning offences***

A list of caning offences prepared from school punishment books by Croydon Education Authority and quoted in the S.T.O.P.P. report *Once Every 19 Seconds* gives a fairly typical picture of the pattern of punishments in England and Wales. Light-caning schools tended only to cane for the 'serious' offences at the top of the list, while the heavy-caning minority would punish for lateness, poor work and so on.

## Caning offences in Croydon

- *Bullying, intimidation • Fighting • Theft • Disruption*
- *Vandalism, illegal entries, creating public nuisance*
- *Assaults on others (staff & pupils)*
- *Forgery, cheating, lying*
- *Rudeness, swearing, disrespect, insubordination*
- *Misbehaviour, some dangerous*
- *Truancy*
- *Smoking*
- *Breach of school rules incl. lateness, insolence, disobedience, poor work*
- *Leaving school premises or lessons without permission*

LIST COMPILED BY CROYDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY FROM  
SCHOOL PUNISHMENT BOOKS

### ***Scotland: heavy reliance on the tawse***

Whereas corporal punishment in most schools south of the border was treated as the final sanction to be used only in extreme cases, the tawse was a far more common part of everyday classroom life. Most teachers who had completed their probationary year were permitted to use one to correct general misbehaviour, and most pupils—of either sex—received the tawse at least once in their school career.

### ***The European Court and abolition in British State schools***

Three ‘milestone’ cases in the European Court of Human Rights illustrate how ‘Europe’ forced the British government towards abolition.

The first was 1981, when the European Court first overruled Britain’s courts on the issue. The case concerned a girl who was given a single stroke of the cane across her hand by her headmaster. Her mother, who disagreed with corporal punishment, brought a civil action for assault in the County Court. Her case was dismissed on the ground that the corporal punishment complained of was not ‘improper, inappropriate or disproportionate’.

With the assistance of S.T.O.P.P. she then took the case to the European Commission of Human Rights, which overrode the

British court and declared it 'degrading' contrary to Article 3 of the Human Rights Convention.

The mother also complained that the authorities' refusal to respect her philosophical conviction that her daughter should not be subjected to corporal punishment was a breach of Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the Convention. The Commission reported that the Government had claimed that this complaint "should be seen in the light of the Government's recent proposals to change the law in relation to parents' philosophical convictions concerning corporal punishment in schools".

A second case concerned Somerset schoolgirl Loretta Blencoe, who, according to her mother, was put across her teacher's knee and slapped "so many times she lost count".

The significance of this case was that it broadened the European Court's influence beyond the use of one particular implement—the cane—to a judgement of corporal punishment generally.

The third case—discussed later in this book—concerned Miss X, who, after being caned across her bottom by her headmistress, was judged to have suffered 'inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' contrary to Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and was awarded compensation of £1,200 and £1,000 in legal costs, which the Government had to pay.

This third case opened the door to the possibility of hundreds of other compensation claims; and it was this, above all, that led to abolition.

The Government had tried to keep corporal punishment: the Education Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph, drafted legislation allowing parents who disagreed with caning to gain an exemption for their children while their classmates could still be caned. The House of Lords ruled that the legislation would be divisive and unworkable and passed it back to the Commons with a recommendation for total abolition.

The decision, when it was made, was a close thing: the day of the vote in Parliament coincided with the wedding of Prince Andrew, with the result that two MPs who were in favour of its retention were caught in traffic on their way to the House. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the then Prime Minister, who was known to be privately

in favour of corporal punishment in schools, abstained. In their absence the motion for abolition was passed by one vote.

### ***The U.S.A.: the liberal North and the spanking South***

Every year, the U.S. beats more schoolchildren than any other nation in the world. Very broadly, the nation can be divided into two: the Northern states where attitudes are more liberal and where corporal punishment is rare; and the Southern states—particularly in rural areas—where attitudes are more traditional and where corporal punishment in schools is common.

A U.S. Education Department survey, released to the press by the National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools in 1988, showed that over a million American schoolchildren were paddled in the 1985-86 school year. Almost eighty percent of these paddlings took place in the twelve Southern states, and almost one in four were administered in Texas alone. Texas—partly because of its size—led the South in sheer numbers, but the state of Arkansas led in the percentage of pupils paddled, spanking almost fourteen percent of its schoolchildren in that one year alone.

In recent years the division between north and south has grown even more marked, with most Northern states (and some 'liberal' urban school districts in the South) abolishing the paddle altogether, while the rural 'Bible Belt' states of the Deep South have grown more strident and more entrenched in their support of it.

Public opinion is as divided as the country's school authorities: a survey conducted by the Gallup organisation for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1989 asked adults whether they were in favour of, or opposed to, spanking and other forms of physical punishment for grade-school children who don't respond to other forms of discipline. The responses were split down the middle, with a slight majority in favour of corporal punishment. 45% said they were opposed to it, 5% were undecided and 50% were in favour.

***U.S.A.: Corporal punishment statistics  
for the year 1985-86***

NUMBER OF PUPILS PADDLED	% OF ENROLLED PUPILS PADDLED
Texas 260,386	Arkansas 13.7
Florida 111,194	Alabama 10.31
Georgia 93,006	Mississippi 10.3
Alabama 77,949	Tennessee 8.76
Tennessee 65,308	Oklahoma 7.94
Arkansas 64,444	Georgia 7.81
Mississippi 55,673	Texas 7.79
Oklahoma 51,306	Florida 7.05
Ohio 43,626	South Carolina 5.56
Louisiana 38,730	Louisiana 4.92
North Carolina 35,446	Kentucky 4.75
South Carolina 31,155	New Mexico 3.88
Indiana 30,820	North Carolina 3.4
Kentucky 30,076	Ohio 2.73
Missouri 19,484	Indiana 2.69
Pennsylvania 11,830	Missouri 2.16
Virginia 11,301	Arizona 1.77
New Mexico 11,109	Delaware 1.43
Arizona 10,375	Virginia 1.14
Illinois 10,249	West Virginia 1.05
Michigan 8,688	Pennsylvania 0.75
California 6,951	Nevada 0.68
Washington 4,520	Illinois 0.6
West Virginia 3,579	Washington 0.58
Oregon 2,489	Iowa 0.54
Kansas 2,481	Michigan 0.53
Colorado 1,631	Kansas 0.53
Delaware 1,239	Oregon 0.5

Nevada 1,098	Idaho 0.37
Idaho 768	Colorado 0.26
Maryland 744	Alaska 0.24
Iowa 499	Wyoming 0.22
Montana 281	Montana 0.16
Alaska 235	California 0.14
Wyoming 215	Maryland 0.12
Nebraska 199	South Dakota 0.07
New York 121	Nebraska 0.06
Minnesota 107	Connecticut 0.02
Wisconsin 101	Utah 0.02
South Dakota 94	Minnesota 0.01
Connecticut 90	Wisconsin 0.01
Utah 55	New Jersey 0.01
New Jersey 11	North Dakota 0.01
North Dakota 10	Rhode Island 0.01
Rhode Island 3	New York 0
Hawaii 0	Hawaii 0
Maine 0	Maine 0
Massachusetts 0	Massachusetts 0
New Hampshire 0	New Hampshire 0
Vermont 0	Vermont 0
U.S.A. 1,099,731	U.S.A. 2.67

*Source: U.S.A. Today, 7th March 1988*

### ***Punishment regulations in the U.S.A.***

Regulations vary widely from state to state and from school district to school district. Very broadly, the Northern states have more legal curbs and restrictions on the corporal punishment meted out in their schools than the Southern ones.

Even within the South there are differences. At one extreme, North Carolina's regulations—unchanged since 1837—allow any degree of severity provided that the teacher does not act 'in malice' and that no permanent bodily injuries are caused. In Florida, on



the other hand the dimensions of the paddle are prescribed (it must be wooden and no larger than two feet long, half an inch thick and four inches wide), as is the target (it may only be used on the buttocks) and the number of strokes (elementary pupils can be struck only twice, junior high pupils three times and high school pupils four times). In addition, the regulations specify how punishments should be carried out: they must always be witnessed by a principal or other teacher, but never in the presence of other pupils, which is deemed to contribute to 'ridicule and shame'. Finally, Florida's principals must notify parents that their child was paddled, keep a record of the paddling and then forward the record to their superiors.

### ***Corporal punishment in the home***

*"Just occasionally I have to threaten my son with my shoe and very, very occasionally, maybe once or twice a year, I have to lay it across his bottom."*

Lucinda Green, equestrienne

*Daily Telegraph*, July 1993

Corporal punishment in the home is still practised by as many parents today as it was twenty years ago, and by almost as many parents as it was even fifty years ago. According to figures published by the Department of Health in July 1995, ninety-seven percent of all British parents have physically punished their children. The same is true in America where, according to the results of a Harris poll published in the *Houston Post* in 1995, out of a sample of twelve hundred adults, eighty percent of parents, irrespective of age, sex or social class are willing to admit to spanking their children on occasion and to believing that spanking is sometimes the most appropriate form of discipline.

However, although the numbers of parents punishing their children have remained more or less constant, the nature of the punishment and the pattern of it have changed. In particular, recent surveys suggest that smacking happens less often than it used to, that 'severe' punishments are far less common than once they were, being administered, typically, to about one child in six nowadays; and that punishment with implements such as canes, slippers or

belts are reserved almost exclusively as last resorts for boys. In addition, fathers are much less involved in the discipline of their children than was once the case, and even the thrashing of boys is now carried out mainly by mothers.

At one time, when 'severe' physical punishment in the home was the rule rather than the exception, a high proportion of girls would be slippered or spanked with a hairbrush, wooden spoon or other domestic implement from time to time, albeit far less often and less severely than their brothers:

*"Both my parents were physical education teachers and they were good with their aim. It did me a lot of good - it certainly didn't do me any harm."*

Rachel Heyhoe-Flint, former England Women's Cricket Captain

*"I was punished as a child, but only when it was a dire emergency. I think spare the rod and spoil the child"*

Lucinda Green, equestrienne

*"My father slapped me with a slipper. He loved me very much and he just thought I had stepped too far over the line. Bad manners was the only reason I was slapped."*

Jilly Cooper, novelist

This kind of punishment of girls is far less common nowadays. According to anti-punishment group E.P.O.C.H., a substantial proportion of mothers are still willing to admit to using slippers, belts, hairbrushes and canes on their sons but very few will admit to punishing their daughters in this way.

The charts below show the findings of a British survey carried out by E.P.O.C.H. into attitudes of mothers to corporal punishment with 'implements' in the home. It is not known how many more parents use implements on occasion but don't readily admit it to researchers; but some estimates put the figure at as least as many again and probably far more.

Whatever the actual figure, one of the most striking facts is the difference in the treatment of the sexes. Almost a quarter of middle-

***Usage of slipper, belt, cane etc. by mothers***

	<i>Managerial/ professional</i>	<i>White collar</i>	<i>Skilled manual</i>	<i>Semi-skilled manual</i>	<i>Unskilled manual</i>
Boys	18	15	10	12	29
Girls	5	2	3	1	11

***Usage of slipper, belt, cane etc. by either parent***

	<i>Managerial/ professional</i>	<i>White collar</i>	<i>Skilled manual</i>	<i>Semi-skilled manual</i>	<i>Unskilled manual</i>
Boys	22	19	14	16	35
Girls	7	4	5	3	14

class parents, for example, admit to beating their boys with ‘implements’, whilst only one in twenty treat their girls in this way. There seems to be little reason to believe that the same parents who are willing to admit to using corporal punishment when they are talking about their sons suddenly become bashful about the subject when they are talking about their daughters; and so it seems reasonable to assume that the sexes are frequently treated differently.

A typical example of this type of ‘boys only’ domestic punishment is described by the novelist Michele Roberts, speaking to the *Independent on Sunday* in April 1994.

“I haven’t had corporal punishment, but my brother used to be whacked by my father. He would be taken into the dining room, the door would be closed and I would stand outside (while) he was being beaten with a leather strap.”

In summary, while some girls do receive corporal punishment in the home, far more of them experience it at second-hand; through watching—or hearing—their brothers being disciplined.

And as in the home, so at school. The corporal punishment of schoolgirls has been, and still is, far more sparingly applied than the punishment of boys. This is particularly true in schools in England and Wales.

## *Home caning of girls in the 1930s*

All this is in marked contrast to attitudes prevailing before the war. In 1939, *Picture Post*, then Britain's most popular illustrated news-magazine, published a long correspondence on the subject of the caning of girls. The great majority of the letters were in favour of it and a very large proportion were from mothers who caned their daughters and the impression given was that the caning of girls was normally considered to be the mother's job. Dozens of letters were printed, but the editors stated that the number actually received ran into hundreds, of which those printed were a representative sample.

When the editors finally called a halt to the long-running correspondence, protests were received, including one from 250 members of a Mothers' Social Welfare organisation. Their spokeswoman, Mrs. W.G. Lynford, wrote:

"... the letters have been very interesting and helpful. We have daughters who have attained that age of thinking they can do just what they please. After giving them a good caning there is a marked improvement in their behaviour. The majority of letters we have read approved the use of the cane and the receivers admit it was given for their own good. *Picture Post* is a widely read and popular weekly and you, the Editor, should give the readers a fair and square deal and print all the letters you received in answer to S. Meadowcroft. . ." (*Picture Post* 30th September 1939)

The editor replied by pointing out that the very large volume of post received on the subject made this impossible.

One further interesting point in relation to this correspondence is that the Nazis appear to have used, years earlier, the propaganda tactics of later 20th-century abolitionists. Mr. William James writes in the issue of the 30th of September 1939: "Your readers will no doubt be sorry to hear that Dr. Goebbels is having several million copies of their letters on the subject of caning distributed in America to prove that we are a nation of sadists" to which the Editor replied: "If he can prove the British a nation of sadists on the strength of this correspondence it will be a small man's biggest achievement."

# *Boys and Girls*

## *Girls treated more leniently*

**B**OYS AND GIRLS are treated differently. Whether at home or at school, girls are far less likely to be punished than boys.

This is particularly true in countries such as England and Wales where corporal punishment is typically kept in reserve as a last resort or final sanction. Before abolition, girls' schools made up a high proportion of the non-caning schools; many of the light-caning majority hardly, if ever, caned girls, and even some of the heavy-caning schools managed to reach their place in the caning league tables by beating boys only.

Litherland School, for example, which punished more of its pupils more often than almost any other school in the country, (152.3 beatings per hundred pupils) managed to achieve its dubious claim to fame without so much as laying a finger on even one girl. Instead, it caned or slippered every boy in the school an average of *three times* in the space of each year. Thus, a boy could be caned for arriving more than five minutes late or speaking out of turn, whilst a girl could commit the worst offences imaginable and still be able to sit down comfortably afterwards.

Even where girls are more regularly beaten—as in Scottish schools prior to abolition and in the Deep South of the U.S.A. today—they are treated far more leniently. For many girls, therefore, corporal punishment at school—as in the home—was experienced at second-hand, through witnessing the punishment of boys.

However—as we will show—girls themselves were on the receiving end of the cane, the tawse, the slipper and the ruler far more often than is generally thought; and in America thousands of girls each year are still paddled in schools throughout the Southern states.

## *Restrictions on the punishment of girls*

Twenty-two local authorities in England and Wales restricted the use of corporal punishment on girls, either detailing special limita-

tions (on the hand only, for example) or, as in Coventry and Powys, banning its use altogether on girls whilst allowing it for boys. Many schools used a less severe implement and fewer strokes on girls: in Leicestershire's secondary schools, for example, over a thousand boys were caned across the hand and seven hundred boys across the bottom in the school year 1980-81. Only seventy-six girls were beaten in the same year, and all received the slipper, rather than the cane across *their* bottoms. Of these girls, thirteen received only one stroke; thirty-one received two strokes; twenty-three received three strokes; seven girls received four strokes and only two received more than four: an average of 2.4 strokes per slippering (calculated on the assumption that 'more than four' means the traditional six). A survey of pupils at child guidance clinics carried out by S.T.O.P.P. revealed that even unusually 'difficult' and disruptive girls were treated less harshly than most boys. Most of the seventy boys interviewed in S.T.O.P.P.'s survey spoke of being beaten; mostly with a cane, across the bottom and fairly frequently. However, only fifteen of the girls had experienced any form of corporal punishment, and the remainder felt themselves to be exempt from it by virtue of their sex:

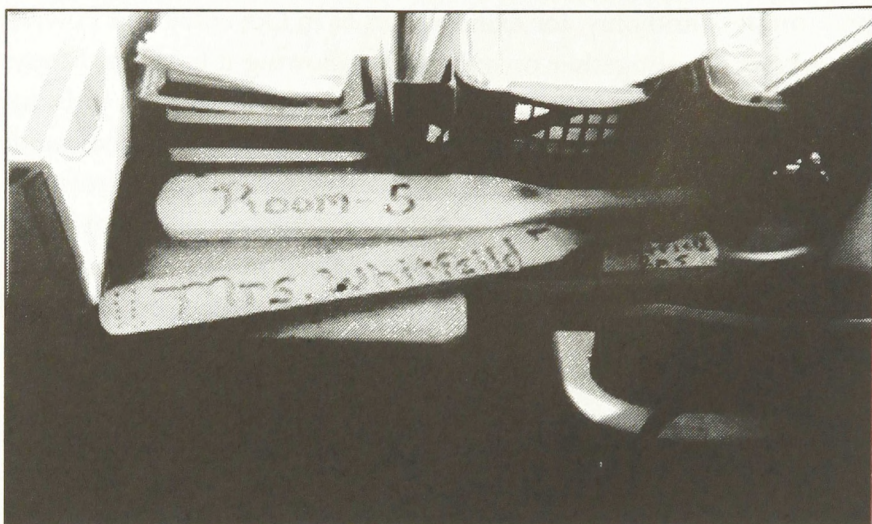
*"Girls get reports for a week. Boys might too but they get caned for fighting and bullying."* (Girl aged twelve in secondary school.)

*"Teacher smacks them with a ruler, only the boys. Doesn't do anything to naughty girls."* (Girl aged eight in junior school.)

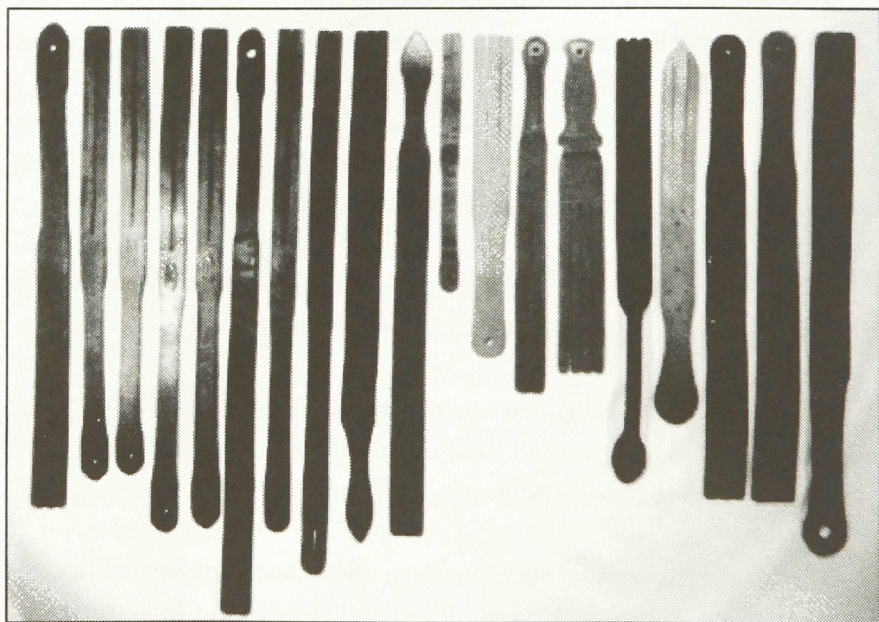
*"The boys sometimes get slipped by a class teacher or caned by the headmaster. They wouldn't cane us. We might have to copy out of a book."* (Thirteen-year-old girl in secondary school.)

Of the girls who *had* been beaten, most had only been beaten once, or twice at the very most. A few spoke of being caned (almost invariably on the hand), whilst the remainder had been slipped (across the bottom), smacked with a ruler (on the hand), or slapped on the legs or bottom with the teacher's hand.

Even in Scotland, where the corporal punishment of both sexes



*Photograph taken on open day of Matamuskeet High School, North Carolina in 1990. The two paddles are classroom implements in everyday use; as such they are both slightly slimmer and lighter than the Principal's 'official' paddle. Both, judging from the handles, have been well used.*



*Traditional school straps from a private collection. Numbers 2, 3 and 4 from the left are by J. Dick of Lochgelly, Fife, the principal Scottish tawse-maker. Although Mr. Dick no longer makes straps, a close likeness of the Lochgelly tawse is still made in Scotland and sold by the Wildfire Club in London.*

was far more of an everyday occurrence, and where there were few regulations, if any, restricting its use on girls, more boys were beaten than girls. A survey of a thousand pupils of each sex carried out by the Scottish Council for Educational Research found that eight hundred of the boys had been strapped, compared with five hundred and seventy of the girls; and that of the pupils who had been strapped, the boys in general had been strapped more often than the girls.

### ***But girls were and are punished***

Despite the disparity between the sexes in the Scottish survey, it is a fact that the majority—nearly six in every ten—Scottish school-girls were strapped during their time at school. In England and Wales, too, a surprising number of girls were beaten in state schools; and from the late seventies onwards the number actually increased, rather than decreased, as the effects of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act were felt. Corporal punishment for girls was reintroduced in Anglesey, and in 1977 Hillingdon Education Authority recommended that both sexes should be caned on the seat, where before caning for girls had been restricted to the hands.

Some of the impetus for equality came from the girls themselves: in one case covered by the national press, the sixth-form girls at a state school in the Midlands went on strike for the right to be caned when, after a mixed group of pupils were caught drinking in a pub, the boys were caned whilst the girls received a ticking-off for the same offence.

According to a survey carried out by the Inner London Education Authority's inspectors in 1976-77, one girl was caned, on average, each day of the school year in that authority's schools alone, and 18.4%—almost one in five—of the girls were caned at least once.

### ***U.S.A.: both girls and boys are paddled***

Each year, thousands of girls are spanked in American schools.

In the academic year 1985-86, just over a million paddlings were administered. It is estimated that between a quarter and a third—between 250,000 and 330,000—were spankings inflicted on girls.



The idea of legally exempting girls from corporal punishment in certain local authority areas seem to be a particularly English phenomenon: in the U.S.A., as in Scotland, girls are liable to be beaten for the same offences as boys. However, because boys tend to commit more serious offences they tend to be paddled more often. Some U.S. abolitionist societies also claim a bias towards boys from Hispanic and other ethnic minority backgrounds.

As well as having fewer 'official' scruples about spanking girls *per se*, many Southern schools—particularly in the South—seem to take a 'you're not too old to be spanked, young lady' approach even to their oldest pupils; or, to quote the principal of the Johnson Central High School in Paintsville, Kentucky, "As long as they break the rules, they are never too old." Where the age of sixteen seems to have been the cut-off point for the corporal punishment of girls in English schools, Bible-belt schools continue to use it even on seventeen-year-olds and beyond.

This attitude—although this is strictly outside the scope of this book—has echoes in the tradition of *hazing* at universities, where freshman *pledges* (first-year undergraduates seeking to join student societies) are ritually humiliated and spanked with a paddle to prove their worthiness to be admitted to *fraternities* (for men) and *sororities* (for women).

# *Girls' Punishments*

*"They cane boys for mucking about and sometimes girls too. They mostly give detention. I haven't had either. Headmaster canes boys on their bottoms and headmistress canes girls on the hand."*

Twelve-year-old girl in a mixed secondary school  
Quoted in *A Last Resort?*, S.T.O.P.P., 1972

## ***Punishments used on girls in British schools***

### **1. THE CANE**

The most common corporal punishment used on girls in England and Wales prior to abolition was the cane, a flexible rattan stick about three feet in length, which was mostly used on the hand. In this case the girl would be made to stand with her arm extended, palm facing upwards to receive, on average, two to three strokes.

Most of the girls punished in Britain's remaining caning schools are caned in this way.

Many boys, and a minority of girls, were caned across the bottom. The girl would be made to touch her toes or to lean across a desk or chair for her punishment. Usually the caning would be given across the seat of the skirt: it was extremely rare (although not unheard-of) for it to be raised for a caning.

Most British canes were made by one company, a Surrey walking-stick maker by the name of Cooper's; although in latter years a printer from Bognor Regis entered the cane-making business and advertised his wares in the back pages of *The Teacher*.

### **2. THE TAWSE**

In schools in Scotland and the north of England the favoured implement was a heavy leather strap around twenty-two inches in length and split for approximately a third to a half of this length into two or three tails. This was invariably used on the open palm.

Versions of the tawse were adopted by schools in countries with

a high proportion of immigrant Scots. In Canada an undivided rubber and canvas version was developed, whilst in Australia an undivided leather version was—and is—used.

In South Africa's Industrial Schools, the preferred implement is a twenty-four by two-inch wooden-handled doubled leather 'tawse', and unlike the Scottish version it is used on the bottom as well as on the hands.

The majority of Scottish tawses were made by J. Dick and Sons of Lochgelly, Fife.

### 3. THE SLIPPER

*"The head would give the cane for boys or the slipper for girls. Not me."*

Junior school girl, quoted in *A Last Resort?*, S.T.O.P.P..

In some British schools a rubber-soled gym shoe was used as a 'milder' alternative to the cane for girls and younger boys. This appears to have been quite widespread in some areas. In Leicestershire, where all of the seventy-six girls punished during the school year 1980-81 were slipped, this appears to have been official policy.

The slipper was also used unofficially or semi-officially in some schools for impromptu, informal punishments by physical education teachers. The slipper was used, in almost all cases, across the bottom.

### 4. OTHER PUNISHMENTS.

Other punishments include the ruler, used across the palm or—very occasionally—the knuckles; and slapping or smacking with the hand. Slapping was usually administered to the bottom or to the backs of the legs. As with slippering and caning, it was—and is—extremely rare for skirts to be raised; although one example is given in *Catalogue of Cruelty*, a 1984 S.T.O.P.P. document where the father of one secondary-school girl is quoted as saying:

"My daughter and two other thirteen-year-olds were made to lift their skirts by a female teacher, who smacked them on the bottom."

At one time slappings, rulerings and other 'unofficial' punishments were widely used by teachers. At Elmhurst, the convent school in Hertfordshire which was attended by the actress Hayley

Mills, in the early 1960s, girls were spanked with wooden hair-brushes by the nuns. In the words of one old girl:

“We were beaten for talking after light, reading ‘Forever Amber’ in chapel, keeping worms in one’s tooth mug, the usual. Say we were talking after lights—the doors would be flung open, Sister Mary Benjamin would snap on the light and say, ‘Pyjama trousers in the middle,’ and then whack us with the back of a hairbrush.”

In 1967, *The Times* reported the case of a schoolmistress who was fined five pounds for making a girl stand on a chair and spanking her legs with the back of a clothes brush.

Evidence was given that the girl had not done any work at all for the whole day and the teacher wanted to give her a shock to cure her work-resistance. There was some disagreement about the severity of the punishment, and how it would have compared with a more ‘regular’ caning or slippering. The father said that his daughter’s legs were red raw when she arrived home from school and that he took her to the doctor, who said that there were bruises on both legs from top to bottom. The doctor’s report, on the other hand, mentioned one bruise on the right calf and one on the left thigh.

In recent years, however, these ‘alternative’ punishments were largely abandoned in favour of less frequent, ‘official’ canings, strappings and slipperings.

### ***Punishments used on girls in American schools***

#### **THE PADDLE**

The paddle, a broad, flat wooden board, is the universal implement of school discipline in the U.S.A.. Some versions have holes drilled in them to increase the speed and painfulness of the blows, but most have a smooth striking-surface. It is *extremely* rare for it to be used on any target other than the bottom; not least because the weight and solidity of it can cause extensive damage to any less well-padded parts of a child’s anatomy.

In sifting through hundreds of case studies whilst researching this book, I have only come across one report of a paddling on a different part of the body. In New Mexico, according to P.T.A.V.E. (Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education) a third grade

# *Corporal Punishment in Girls' Schools*

*1984 policy on corporal punishment in some girls' secondary schools which retained the cane, as set out in school prospectuses:*

<i>School</i>	<i>Education authority</i>	<i>Policy</i>
Selly Park	Birmingham	Corporal punishment administered according to Birmingham L.E.A. discipline policy.
Swanshurst	Birmingham	Corporal punishment administered according to Birmingham L.E.A. discipline policy.
Turves Green	Birmingham	Corporal punishment administered according to L.E.A. discipline policy.
Westwood	Croydon	Only in extreme cases is corporal punishment used and this would only be administered by the head-mistress.
Tolworth	Kingston	The school retains the option on corporal punishment, although it is rarely used.
Kitwood Girls	Lincolnshire	Very rarely the cane is used for gross bullying. A hardened bully seems only to understand physical punishment and is dealt with accordingly. This is administered by the Head, witnessed by the Year Tutor and Senior Mistress.

Lewis Girls	Mid-Glamorgan	When other means of discipline are found to be ineffective, corporal punishment may be administered by authorised members of staff.
Sacred Heart	Newcastle	Corporal punishment is used only as a last resort in cases of bullying or persistent disruptive behaviour. The Pastoral Deputy Head is entirely responsible for the administering of corporal punishment but she may, on occasion, delegate this responsibility.
Burton Stone	Yorkshire	In extreme cases corporal punishment is a sanction which may be used by the school and is usually administered by senior members of staff and recorded in the Log Book.
Smethwick Hall Girls	Sandwell	In rare cases the cane is used by the headmistress.
Heathfield House	South Glamorgan	On occasions, and only in extreme cases, corporal punishment will be administered—but only by the headmistress. The cane is the instrument used.
Gorse Park	Trafford	Corporal punishment is very rarely used.
Walton	Dudley	Corporal punishment is used.

girl was paddled across the backs of her thighs after refusing to lean across the desk for a more conventional spanking. The girl's principal called for assistance from a teacher, who took hold of her by the ankles and lifted her legs off the floor, allowing the principal to smack her on the backs of her legs, which were bare where her skirt had ridden up. The result was that the skin was broken in several places and large welts were visible for some time afterwards.

### ***Most punishments carried out in mixed schools***

Most corporal punishment of schoolgirls, both in Britain and the U.S.A., was and is carried out in mixed schools. A high proportion of British girls' schools either abandoned the cane some years before abolition or—as can be seen from the list below—kept it in reserve only for 'gross bullying' and other extreme offences.

### ***Most British girls punished by female teachers***

*"The senior mistress, a woman who has been at the school for eight years and is generally liked and respected, is responsible for caning the girls.... I have seen her walking into a lesson carrying a pile of books and a cane, which she waved threateningly at any sign of misbehaviour. During these periods, actual punishments sometimes did result, administered in the office next door"*

Teacher's report in *A Last Resort?*, S.T.O.P.P. 1972

*"The deputy head canes girls in her study"*

Fourteen-year-old secondary school girl in *A Last Resort?*

The vast majority of punishments administered to girls in Britain's State schools were carried out by female teachers. Many of these schools were bound by local authority restrictions and others by written or unwritten school rules. However, a small number of other schools did permit men to punish girls.

Ripon City school in North Yorkshire was very unusual both in that all canings of girls were carried out, as a matter of stated policy, by the headmaster himself; and in the fact that this policy was published in the 1984 prospectus.

The punishment of girls by men in Britain is sufficiently unusual to raise eyebrows and even, at times, to lead to legal action.

Even for a male teacher to assist in, or to witness, a girl's punishment is often frowned on in British education. In 1976, for example, the head of Camden Square School in Seaham, County Durham, received complaints after he held a fifteen-year-old girl down over a platform while a female teacher gave her six strokes of the cane across her bottom. The parents, it seems, were more outraged by what they saw as the 'inappropriateness' of his role in the punishment than they were by the caning itself.

In 1981, Worcester Education Authority was taken to court by a Mr. and Mrs. Campbell after their sixteen-year-old daughter was caned by her headmaster in front of another male teacher. In this case, the County Court ruled that the punishment was lawful and found in the Education Authority's favour, but there have been other cases, some of which are discussed in a later chapter, where there is clear evidence of bad judgement at the very least in some cases, and of far more serious impropriety in others.

### ***Typical punishment offences: a selection of cases from S.T.O.P.P.'s files***

#### ***Fighting/bullying***

Hannah McGrath, a fifteen-year-old pupil at St. John's RC secondary school in Liverpool, was given two strokes of the cane on her hand in 1984 for fighting with another girl

*S.T.O.P.P. News, April/May 1994*

The mother of a girl at a school in the London Borough of Redbridge told S.T.O.P.P.:

"My thirteen-year-old daughter tells me she's going to get the cane on Monday. Another girl insulted her, and my daughter got involved in a fight."

*Catalogue of Cruelty, S.T.O.P.P. 1984*

#### ***Aggressive behaviour***

Tricia (name changed), a Warwickshire schoolgirl then aged fifteen, spat at a sixth-former. Her parents then received a letter to say that



she would receive the tawse. When Mrs Watson (name changed), the girl's mother, complained, she was offered the option of temporary suspension. Tricia's mock 'O' levels were approaching, and she could not afford to miss any schooling, so she reluctantly agreed to receive two strokes of the tawse on her hands.

*Catalogue of Cruelty*, S.T.O.P.P. 1984

### ***Smoking***

In 1985 a fifteen-year-old girl was caned across her hand by the deputy head of Duchy Grammar School, Truro in Cornwall, after she was caught smoking.

*S.T.O.P.P. News*, January 1986

In March 1983 S.T.O.P.P. wrote to a senior teacher at Queen Anne High School, Dunfermline, Fife, complaining about the strapping of a second-year girl for smoking. Mr. R.G. Houston, Senior Assistant Director of Education at Fife education authority stated "I understand no complaint has been received either from the girl or her parents."

*Catalogue of Cruelty*, S.T.O.P.P. 1984

### ***General misbehaviour***

Twelve-year-old Joanne Lund and two other girls at Our Lady's RC High School in Lancaster each received two strokes of the tawse across their hands by a female teacher after a prank involving eggs and flour being thrown at a girl who was celebrating her birthday.

*S.T.O.P.P. News*, June/July 1985

### ***English girls rarely beaten:***

#### ***Scottish and Southern U.S. girls beaten more often***

It is interesting to note that the offences for which girls are given corporal punishment in England are far fewer and far more heavily biased towards fighting and bullying and other more serious offences than those of boys, whose punishable offences tend to be more wide-ranging. It seems that girls are far less likely to be pun-

country.

Not only indicated by the newspaper article of the early 70's but is so today that girls the age of 15-18 are occasionally "paddled".

In regard to your last question, our laws do not state that a person of the same sex must administer corporal punishment to the student. Our local Board of Education has established that any staff member who administers corporal punishment must have another staff member present when the student is being paddled. In most cases, a lady staff member is present to witness the paddling of a girl. Yes, we do have some lady teachers who will paddle boys.

Allow me to give you some information on our school. We have some 40 classrooms, a gymnasium which seats an excess of 4,000 people, a football stadium that seats 2,000 people, a base ball stadium which is sufficient nature

### **Co-Educational Corporal Punishment in America**

*Paddling of female pupils by male teachers and vice versa.  
Extract from a letter received in 1977 from a sixteen-year-old  
female pupil at Johnson High, Kentucky.*

ished for minor offences than are boys.

This distinction between the treatment of the sexes is particularly marked in England and Wales. It is present in other educational cultures such as Scotland before abolition and in rural schools in America's Deep South; but to a much lesser degree. In American schools, for example, almost a quarter of all spankings are administered to girls; compared with a fraction of that amount in England.

### ***Corporal punishment in the U.S.A.***

Besides the preference for the paddle, American corporal punishment has a number of important differences from British discipline:

There is a strong 'voluntary' or 'optional' aspect: it is common for pupils or their parents to be offered a choice between corporal and non-corporal punishment. The most common choice is between a number of strokes of the paddle and the same number of days suspension from school.

Baseball's 'three strike' rule often applies. A comparatively minor offence may merit a spanking if it is repeated soon after one or two warnings for previous occurrences. In November 1991, for example, Renee Mull, a fourteen-year-old eighth-grader at LaMarque Junior High School in Texas, was paddled for arriving persistently late for school. Renee refused to bend over, saying that lateness was not normally a paddling offence. The administrator, Mrs. Love, called for assistance from two members of staff, Mr. McKay and Miss Austgen, who held her arms and bent her across a conference table. Mrs. Love then gave Renee five hard 'swats' across her bottom.

Punishment by a person of the opposite sex is less rare. Whilst it is most common for girls to be paddled by women and boys by men, it is not too far out of the ordinary for the reverse to apply.

Age is less of a barrier to punishment in the U.S.A.. No British school would beat a seventeen-year-old girl: many American schools do.

In the words of Willis Conley, principal of Johnson Central High School in Paintsville, Kentucky, who replied, when questioned about his policy of paddling girls of sixteen: "Paddling is the only language some of these kids understand. As long as they break the rules, they are never too old."

### ***Paddling offences***

Croydon's list of caning offences could apply equally well to many American schools. As in Britain, American girls are sometimes given non-corporal punishments for minor offences which boys might be beaten for; but are paddled for persistent violence and bullying. However, some paddling offences are peculiarly American: Kimberly Jones, for example, of Bartow High School near Tampa, Florida, was paddled for *parking her car on the grass*. According to the Tampa Tribune she was one of nine pupils given the choice of three 'swats' of the paddle or three days' suspension by the assistant Principal, Ralph Anthony, after parking their cars on the school's manicured lawns. Some of the young men involved insisted on an appeal to Principal Bill Bryan, who was absent at a funeral, but Kimberly, an honours student never before reprimanded, chose to be paddled.

# *A Caning School*

*by Miss Marianne Martindale*

**D**URING the preparation of this book, there came into our hands a fascinating document: the Punishment Book of Broad Street Girls' School which later became Broad Heath Secondary School. The School, as shown by stamps inside the book, fell under the jurisdiction of the Coventry Education Committee.

The Punishment Book records canings administered to girls in the school beginning in 1914 and ending in 1972. In all 263 canings of girls are recorded, along with the names of the girls, reasons for punishment, date and often the name of the mistress administering punishment—the exact method of keeping the book changes from time to time. The book does not actually provide a column for recording the mistress's name, though for almost exactly ten years—from June 1922 to May 1931—the *Remarks* column is used for this purpose. Before and after this period it is used, as one would expect, for remarks concerning the punishment and its occasion until, in the 1960s, the rather curious practice is instituted of having the girl “sign for” her punishment. Her name is entered in the *Name* column as always and her signature appears in the *Remarks* column.

For many girls a single caning suffices to keep them on the straight and narrow, but there are a few persistent offenders. Gwen Griffiths, for example, is caned on June the 9th 1920 together with Amy Smith for “direct disobedience”. On the 17th of September she and Ella Ansell are caned for “leaving school premises without permission”. On March the 22nd 1921 Gwen is caned again for “disobedience and refusing to answer” and on November the 27th she is caned for “rudeness to teacher”.

It is not uncommon for girls to be caned in twos or in groups. On June the 16th 1922, Winnie Higginbottom, Olive Higginbottom, Phyllis Sargent, Violet Johnson and Beatrice Scott are all caned for “disobedience after repeated warnings”. On April the 13th 1951, Pauline Walters, Barbara Holte and Doris Hignett receive two

# *Canings Recorded in the Broad St. Girls' School Punishment Book*

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Canings</i>	<i>No. of Strokes</i>
1914	27	all 1 stroke.
1915	28	two of 2 strokes.
1916	27	all 1 stroke.
1917	16	two of 2 strokes.
1918	17	all 1 stroke.
1919	4	all 1 stroke.
1920	11	all 1 stroke.
1921	7	all 1 stroke.
1922	13	all 1 stroke.
1923	4	all 1 stroke.
1924	5	all 1 stroke.
1925	11	all 1 stroke.
1926	5	one of 2 strokes.
1927	7	all 1 stroke.
1928	1	1 stroke.
No canings recorded for 1929 or 1930		
1931	6	one of 3 strokes
1932	5	two of 2 strokes.
One caning recorded for 1933 or 1934 (dating not clear—it could belong to 1935 making the total 2).		
1935	1	1 stroke.
1936	3	one of 2 strokes.
1937	1	1 stroke.

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Canings</i>	<i>No. of Strokes</i>
1938	2	both 1 stroke.
No canings recorded 1939 – 1945.		
1946	2	one of 2 strokes.
1947	1	not recorded.
No canings recorded 1948 – 1950.		
1951	3	all 2 strokes.
No canings recorded for 1952.		
1953	8	two of 2 strokes.
1954	2	not recorded.
No canings recorded 1955 – 1960.		
1961	3	one of 2 strokes, two of 4 strokes.
1962	2	both of 4 strokes.
1963	12	six of 2 strokes, three of 3 strokes, three of 4 strokes.
1964	8	four of 2 strokes, four of 4 strokes.
1965	9	four of 2 strokes, five of 4 strokes .
1966	5	two of 2 strokes, two of 4 strokes, one not recorded.
No canings recorded 1967 – 1970.		
1971	4	two of 2 strokes one of 3 strokes, one of 4 strokes.
1972	1	2 strokes.

*Broad St Girls'* School.

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PUNISHMENT  
BOOK.

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Extract from the New Code, 1900.—Appendix II, 32.—“A separate book must be kept in which every case of corporal punishment inflicted in the school should be entered.”

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Price Eighteen Pence Net.

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MANCHESTER:  
THOMAS WYATT, 279, Deansgate.

20210

***Title Page of the Broad Street Punishment Book***

*Quoting the regulation which made the use of such books compulsory in schools. The book was produced by a private company in Manchester and sold at one shilling and sixpence.*

***Facing page:*** *Entries from 1914. Caning is relatively frequent. One stroke is the standard punishment.*





Department.	No.	Name	Office	Date of Office	School.
		Robt Simpson		12. 5. 25	
		May Hunter	1. 1. 26 discipline	11. 6. 25	
		Boa Penket	Reported bad work	18. 6. 25	
		John Wilson	Reported bad work	15. 6. 25	
		John Wilson	Discipline	31. 8. 25	
		John Prescott	Deliberate disobedience	11. 11. 25	
		John Wilson	Deliberate disobedience	30. 11. 25	
		John Wilson	Disgraceful work after repeated warnings	15. 12. 25	
1926		John Wilson	Discipline	5. 2. 26	
Feb 5		John Wilson	Discipline	11. 3. 26	
Jan 9		John Wilson	Discipline	11. 6. 26	
Feb 14		John Wilson	Discipline	11. 6. 26	

Punishment Awarded	Date of Punishment	Remarks
1 stroke on hand	14. 5. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	11. 6. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	18. 6. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	15. 6. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	31. 8. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	11. 11. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	30. 11. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	15. 12. 25	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	5. 2. 26	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	11. 3. 26	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	11. 6. 26	1 stroke on hand
1 stroke on hand	11. 6. 26	1 stroke on hand

The 1920s: Caning is becoming less frequent.  
Facing Page: De facto abolition seems to approach. A single page covers the years from 1938 to 1951. The two-stroke caning becomes more frequent.

Initials of  
Manager,  
Clerk, or

Department.

School.

Principal Teacher.

No.

Name

Office

Date of  
Office

Punishment Awarded

Date of  
Punishment

Remarks

Initials of  
Manager,  
Clerk, or  
Inspector

Kathleen Ford.

divorce divorce

12/4/13

1 stroke

30/9/38

1st best flying girl

B5.

Elizabeth Beryl White

continued bad conduct 37<sup>th</sup> Dec. 40

La. Newfield girl

1 stroke

27/12/46

A very difficult girl. (Newfield)

B5.

Thomas 1<sup>st</sup> year Windridge

Disobedience &amp; interference to

Thomas 1<sup>st</sup>

2 strokes

7/3/46

continued wrong of no use.

B5

Elizabeth Evans

8. Cribbing throat

Elizabeth 37<sup>th</sup> Dec. 40

Cried on seat

24/12/47

A girl absolutely out of hand. Note about bad behavior sent to mother.

B5

coat of delicate girl who had just come out of hospital &amp; who had to go home without coat on a bitter day

Apr 13<sup>th</sup>

Pauline Watson. Suffering scaling

Apr 13.

2 strokes

13/1/51

Shedding scaling renewed

B5

Barbara Stoll

As above

"

"

"

"

B5

Dora Hyman

As above

"

"

"

"

B5

Department.	School.	Principal Teacher.				
No.	Name	Office	Date of Office	Punishment Awarded	Date of Punishment	Remarks
	Linda Cokerill	Bad behaviour after leaving	11/6/65	2 Strokes	11/6/65.	Linda Cokerill
	Claudia Bailey.	Bad behaviour in Mrs Reynolds class on	22.6.65	4 strokes	23/6/65	C. Bailey
	Theresa Thompson	Rudeness to a member of staff	28.9.65	4 strokes	28/9/65	J Thompson.
	Linda Stanley	Rudeness	28.9.65	4 strokes	28/9/65	Linda Stanley
	Ruby R. Jenkins	Rudeness	28.9.65	4 strokes	28/9/65	Ruby Jenkins
	Linda Cokerill	Calling Mrs Holdaway a "cretin" 20.9.	15.11.65	4 strokes	17.11.65	Linda Cokerill
	Claudia Bailey	Rudeness to Mrs Reynolds	24.11.65	2 strokes	24.11.65	Bailey.
25.4.	Pinky Kaur	Taunting + telling lies + forging letters on form books.	2.3.66	4 strokes	2/3/66	Pinky Kaur
	Theresa Thompson	leaving school at 3 p.m without informing me.	15.3.66	4 strokes	16.3.66.	J Thompson, L. Freeman.
	Lynda Freeman	"	"	"	"	"
	Hannah Dyke	Rudeness	18.5.66	2	18.5.66.	Hannah Dyke

**The mid-'60s:** Caning revival—punishment becomes much more frequent and more severe. Four-stroke punishments are now common with two strokes as the new minimum.

strokes each for “defacing ceiling”. In the *Remarks*, we read “Stock-room ceiling ruined”. Nonetheless, the great majority of canings are individual.

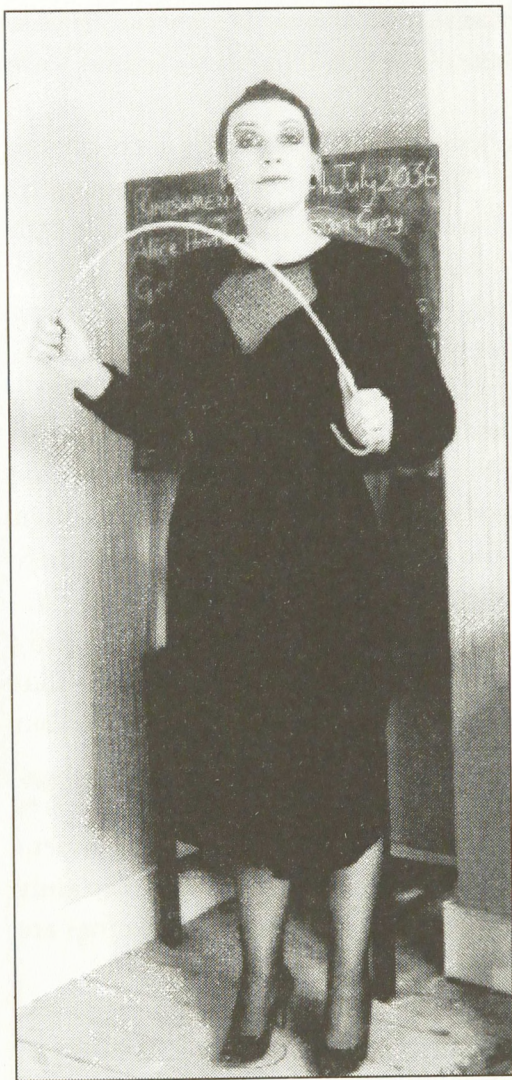
In many cases the description of the offence is terse in the extreme—“Rudeness” and “Disobedience” appear frequently. Gerty Wood and Alice Ward are caned together on May the 15th 1930 for “extreme rudeness”. Many entries, however, tell a fuller story. Julie Roberts is caned on May the 21st 1963 for “Throwing stones at the house near the annexe”. While Clara Teale is caned on the 24th of February 1947 for “Striking Headmistress, Hiding coat of delicate girl who has just come out of hospital and who had to go home without coat on a bitter day.” Under *Punishment Awarded* we learn that Clara was “caned on seat as she would not hold out her hand.” Not surprisingly, the *Remarks* record: “A girl absolutely out of hand. Note about bad behaviour sent to mother.” On November the 30th 1936 Pat Corke was caned for an offence reticently described as “Impatience”, however, under *Remarks* we learn that “Pat had been asked to unpick her knitting and had not done so but thrown her work across the classroom.”

Very definite patterns emerge from the book concerning the frequency and severity of punishment. From 1914 to 1918, punishment is quite frequent. The level, if not “Victorian” is certainly “Edwardian”. During this five-year period a total of 118 canings are administered—an average of 23 per year.

In 1919 the number suddenly drops to four canings in the whole year, and while the figure fluctuates somewhat, it never returns to previous levels. Throughout the 1920s the average is 6.8 per year (averages are based only on those years in which canings actually take place). The change is very dramatic and coincides with the end of the Great War.

Why did this happen? There was no change of Headmistress. Miss Ada J. Wade is the Head from the beginning of the book until at least 1935. Were directives sent out? Or were Miss Wade and her staff simply and very suddenly affected by the Spirit of the '20s? Not quite so suddenly, perhaps, for in the first three years of the War the average is 27.3 canings per year, while in the last two it is only 17.5.

In the 1930s the frequency drops again. The average is now only

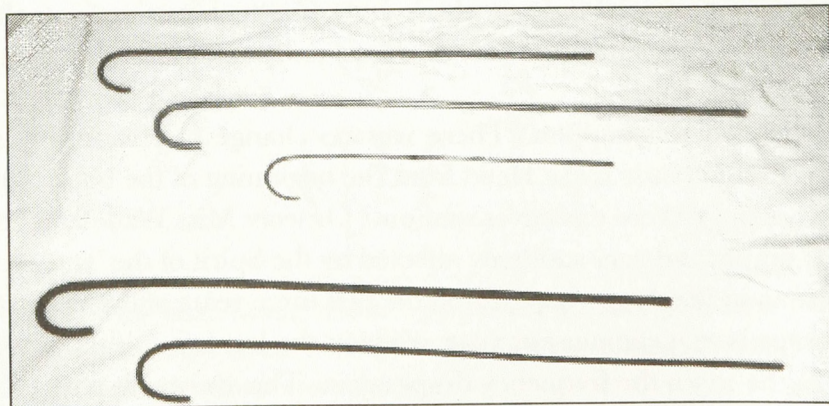


Miss Marianne Martindale displays a traditional English school cane. Even the thicker examples—like the one shown—are extremely flexible. Most British canes were made by one company, a Surrey walking-stick maker by the name of Cooper's. Since abolition in State schools they have become hard to find, with only sub-standard imitations abounding in the 'adult' market.

**Below:** A selection of canes of different grades and types made in the traditional manner.

These are still available from The Wildfire Club, B.M. Elegance, London W.C.I.

A spokeswoman for the Club says "our canes are not made as accessories for adult 'games' but are intended for genuine disciplinary use."



2.5 canings per year—only 18 are given throughout the decade. In the 1940s total abolition appears to be approaching. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the two wars. In the First World War 118 canings were administered, throughout the whole of the Second World War, not one! However, we must treat this datum with some caution as it may be that wartime conditions in some way led to the book's falling into disuse over this period—bearing in mind that Coventry was one of the most heavily-bombed cities in the Kingdom. It is possible that the record continued in a different place. Nonetheless, if it *is* true that caning ceased for these years, it is certainly consistent with the trend established in the period leading up to them and with the fact that although canings resume in 1946, there are only three canings altogether for the rest of the '40s.

In the early 1950s there is something of a revival of caning. 13 canings are given in three years—an average for those years of 4.3 per year—higher than the 1930s; and then no canings are recorded for six years from 1955 to 1960—almost as long as the wartime gap.

In the 1960s something quite unexpected happens. Between 1961 and 1966 there is a definite revival of caning, particularly in the last four years of the period. Not only do canings increase dramatically in frequency, but the severity also increases to a surprising degree. Before this time almost all canings consist of a single stroke with two strokes being the maximum, very rarely given. The only exception to this rule occurred on November the 18th 1931 when Olive Green received three strokes for impudence. It is also noticeable that from the '30s onward canings of two strokes form a much higher proportion of the greatly reduced number of canings—a shift, perhaps from the concept of “little and (relatively) often” to that of the cane as a severe last resort.

In 1961, after six years with no canings at all, three canings are given—one of the previous maximum of two strokes and *two*, on different occasions, not of three but of the previously unheard-of four.

In 1962 there are only two canings, but both are of four strokes and in 1963 there are no less than twelve canings—the highest annual total since 1922—half being of the previous rare maximum, two strokes and the other half surpassing it—three of three strokes

and three of four strokes. Nor is 1962 a freak year. After three entire decades in which the annual totals are one, two or three (if there are any canings at all, and with the single exception of 1953), we have eight in 1964 and nine in 1965—and the same pattern is maintained of two strokes, the previous maximum, becoming the new minimum and accounting for only about half the punishments given. The single change is that the three-stroke caning has now disappeared and the alternative to two strokes is now always four strokes. Altogether in the six years from 1961 to 1966 there are 39 canings—more than in the '30s, '40s and '50s put together—of which eighteen are of four strokes, seventeen of two strokes, four of three strokes and none of one stroke.

Then, between 1966 and 1971 there are no canings and after a brief revival in 1971 when four are given and the level of severity is still high (two of two strokes, one of three, one of four), there is a single caning of “Diwan Chand (boy)” in 1972. The only boy in the book and the final entry. After this, presumably, corporal punishment had been abolished *de facto* if not *de jure*.

Why, then, this sudden revival of corporal punishment in the early-to-mid 1960s? Was it a healthy reaction against “the spirit of the '60s”? Or was it simply that the general standards of behaviour among schoolchildren were degenerating so rapidly that mistresses felt impelled to take stern measures in a short-lived attempt to stem the tide?

Certainly the kind of offence for which girls are caned is often more serious than before. On the 27th of February 1964, Julie Roberts, Carol Hill and Diane Barr were caned—four strokes each—for being “out of school looking for jobs & picked up by the police with two boys of doubtful character.” Nothing like this appears earlier in the book. On the 14th of May in the same year, Christine Coles receives two strokes for “insulting remark and swearing [at] a member of staff”. On the 29th of the same month Margaret Donnelly is caned for “disobedience—being in yd. where she should not be and throwing stones”. On the 15th of November 1965, Linda Cockerill receives a caning of four strokes for “calling Miss Holdaway a ‘cheeky sod’” and on the 2nd of March 1966 Pindy Kaur receives the same punishment for “truancy & telling lies

& forging letters as from parents". Truancy is a word that occurs much more frequently than before. A picture emerges of a generation in which the worst elements are louder, rougher, and more unpleasant than ever before and those in authority have not yet abdicated the responsibility of doing something about it.

Nonetheless, there is also an increased strictness toward lesser offences. Linda Wykes is caned on the 20th of February 1964 for lateness—"6 times since January". She receives two strokes for what would certainly have been a one-stroke offence before the demise of that penalty.

Is it too fanciful to see in the punishment record of this one school in the 1960s the image of a world balanced on a knife-edge? We naturally tend to view history with hindsight and to half-assume that what *did* happen was what inevitably *must* have happened. It is not so. It is entirely possible that in the early- to mid-1960s things still *might* have gone either way. The forces of destruction and degeneracy were still being met by a strong counter-reaction. If it had been stronger, more determined and had been provided with a sounder intellectual basis, the ugly, neurotic nightmare-world of the 1980s and '90s might still have been avoided.

In the Punishment Book we see a reflection of one small theatre of that war. We see the forces of chaos surging forward with the crushing weight of an avalanche; standards undermined; new forms of nastiness infiltrating the once-protected world of the school; girls, good and "bad", pawns in a greater and darker game being played, essentially, by the mind-shapers of the mass-media; and we see the forces of order reacting briefly and bravely with a belated firmness and an unflinching resolution to protect the innocents in their charge before their own confusion, demoralisation, rout and final surrender.

Or is the surrender final?



# *The Bible Belt*

*Refrain not from chastening a child: for if thou beat him with the rod, he shall not die. For thou scourge him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul...*

Proverbs XXIII, 13-14

**F**OR teachers in most British schools and in quite a few American schools, particularly in the North, corporal punishment was and is a matter of educational practice; and is approved of or disapproved of according to whether it is believed to be effective and morally right. For teachers in many schools of the 'Bible Belt' of the Deep South, and for the parents of the children they teach, it is much more than that. For these people it is an item of religious faith, specifically mentioned in the Bible as the method of dealing with naughty children, without which their impressionable young souls will inevitably stray from the path of righteousness.

A survey printed in the *Nashville Banner* in 1992 found a great correlation between Southern-style religion and belief in corporal punishment. Almost without exception, those who favour prayer and the teaching of creationism in schools also favour the use of the paddle.

Bible-belt fundamentalists are nothing if not literal in their interpretation of the Scriptures. When Terry Kopanski became a principal in Vanderbilt, Tennessee in 1992, and shocked the local community by stating that he was going to abolish corporal punishment at his school, he was called before a gathering of Tennessee school board members to explain himself. The first question that he was asked was, "Do you believe in God?" When he answered that he did, the next question was, "Are you calling God a liar?" The governor then opened his Bible at Proverbs XXIII, slammed it down on the table in front of Mr. Kopanski and stood there, arms folded, with a 'now get out of that' expression on his face.

## ***A different approach***

Because corporal punishment in the Bible Belt is seen as a positive force which helps in the growth of children's souls, rather than as

an unpleasant but necessary last resort, it is typically less hedged around with restrictions and safeguards than it is in the secular or moderate Church of England tradition of British education. For this reason, the spanking of pupils—and even pupils in their late teens—by a teacher of the opposite sex is not frowned upon in the way that it is elsewhere.

Mary Ann Bernicky, one of the very few abolitionists amongst the largely fundamentalist Tennesseans, complained to the press about the fact that a male teacher is allowed to take a female high school pupil into a closed room to paddle her: “Even physicians are required to have a nurse present,” she said. Miss Bernicky received very little support. “Unfortunately,” she said, rather understating the case in the face of the overwhelmingly hostile response she received, “Tennessee is lagging behind the other states in response to this issue.”

### ***The rôle of parents***

The impetus for corporal punishment in the Bible Belt comes as much from parents concerned that their children receive a ‘proper’ Christian education as it does from teachers merely concerned with practicalities of running a school.

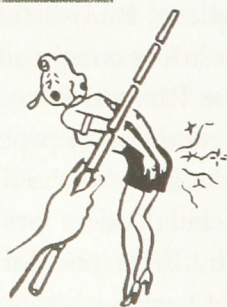
Whereas in Britain it is an occupational hazard for teachers in caning and non-caning schools alike to be harangued by parents complaining that they have been too strict with their sons and daughters, Bible-belt teachers are as likely to be told they have not been strict enough; although few go to the extremes of Philadelphia parent Richard Borst, who was ordered to attend group counselling as a condition of probation after marching into his seventeen-year-old daughter’s school, turning her over his knee and spanking her at a cheerleaders’ practice session.

Mr. Borst had forbidden her to join the school cheer-leading squad because his church taught that the uniforms were immoral. The forty-six year-old furnace repairman told juvenile authorities he had discovered his daughter had disobeyed him when he went to her school to repair some heating equipment and saw her practising with other cheerleaders.

He conceded that he may have used poor judgement when he



*Mrs. Ann Torbert of Texas with the belt she used to punish her daughter Tammy. After Mrs. Torbert objected to the paddling of her daughter at school a compromise was reached whereby she was allowed to come to the school and administer punishment with the belt she used for home discipline. An assistant principal of the school was quoted as saying: "Tammy would have been better off taking the paddle swats from us: her Mom really sizzled her behind with that strap."*



*Illustration accompanying the correspondence on the caning of girls, Picture Post August 5th 1939 (see p. 37).*

spanked her in full view of other pupils and staff, but claimed that it was his right as a father to administer 'parental discipline'. Department of Social Services officials disagreed, claiming that the length, severity and manner of the punishment that was administered went far beyond normal discipline. Mr. Borst, backed by a large group from his church, claimed that he had spanked his daughter across his lap in the 'usual and time-honoured manner.'

### ***Parents who object receive little support***

Ann Torbert, a Texas mother, started by threatening to go to the White House unless teachers at Mesquite High School in Mesquite, Texas, stopped paddling her fifteen-year-old daughter. In the end, her petition for the abolition of the paddle managed to attract only a few signatures, and was according to Hyman and Wise's *Corporal Punishment in American Education*, "eclipsed by another petition in favour of strong discipline" signed by staff, pupils and parents.

"If they can take prayer out of schools," said Mrs. Torbert, after learning that her daughter Tamara May ("Tammy") was about to be paddled for the second time that year, "they can take corporal punishment out, too."

As it was, she was only able to stop Tammy being paddled by going into the school and punishing her herself.

Tammy detailed what her earlier paddlings were like: "They make you spread your legs and bend over and put your hands flat on the desk," she said, "then they rub the paddle lightly on your rear end just to kind of tease you, and then they hit you as hard as they can." She went on to tell how she had received four strokes or 'swats' on that occasion:

"I was getting hit so hard I squirmed around and the last one landed on my leg," she said, adding that the bruises on her leg and bottom lasted for days afterwards.

Facing strong opposition from school officials who claimed their right to maintain authority was at stake, Tammy's mother finally agreed that her daughter deserved to be punished, but insisted on coming to the school to administer the punishment herself. Tammy bent over the Principal's desk and Mrs. Torbert punished her with the belt she used for discipline at home.

Depending on which of the reports you read, Tammy was either given a few light smacks with the belt (according to the abolitionist *Corporal Punishment in American Education*) or, according to the local paper, ten hard strokes, after which an assistant principal was quoted as saying:

“Tammy would have been better off taking the paddle swats from us: her Mom really sizzled her behind with that strap.”

This discrepancy in the reported ‘facts’ between pro- and anti-corporal punishment accounts of school discipline is commonplace. People emphasise, ignore or exaggerate to suit their particular ‘slant’. It is understandable, but it is a problem for the writer of a factually-based book on the subject. The problem of biased reporting is something that is discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

### ***Private schools and reformatories in the Bible Belt***

If State-controlled schools in the Bible Belt are often liberal in their use of the paddle, private institutions—particularly those controlled directly by fundamentalist churches—are even more so.

Perhaps most surprising to outsiders are the growing number of private reformatories such as Texas’s Rebekah Home for Girls, which have official sanction to take children and teenagers sentenced by the State’s courts. The Rebekah home claims to ‘reform the lives’ of delinquent girls so that, in a short time, they can re-enter society, having turned their backs on their murky past forever.

The Rebekah Home is oversubscribed, as girls opt for this form of treatment in preference to longer custodial sentences in state institutions, and to probation and the treatment offered by the social services. Yet, despite its apparent popularity among young offenders, it is extremely harsh in its treatment of girls. The Rev. Lester Roloff who runs the home, says that it is just this harshness that is responsible for the institution’s claimed 100% success rate. According to the statistics, no girl who has ever completed her course of readjustment there has ever faced another criminal charge; although the crimes that the girls in the home have committed range from drug trafficking and theft to violence and prostitution.

The Rev. Roloff, who is an fundamentalist preacher as well as a strict disciplinarian teacher, believes that the purpose of corporal

punishment is “to drive out the devil from their bodies, which are as black as sin”, as he puts it.

The girls live in very frugal accommodation—three or more to a room—and wear a dowdy uniform. No make-up is ever allowed. All their letters are opened by staff, and they are not allowed to read newspapers, magazines or novels. Television, radio and records are totally banned in favour of formal school lessons (often to catch up on education the girls missed in their youth) as well as group discussions on how to lead normal lives in society on their release.

As might be expected, America’s liberals are outraged by these kinds of institutions and by the teaching methods of people like the Rev. Roloff. They complain that corporal punishment is dealt out liberally and that girls have been put into handcuffs and straitjackets, as well as being confined to dark, solitary rooms, and say that these old-fashioned methods simply won’t work in modern society. The association of Texas psychologists in particular are infuriated by what they see and hear at the Rebekah Home: so much so that they frequently call on the State to close the place and banish the Rev. Roloff from the locality altogether.

All of these charges are freely admitted by Mr. Roloff, and he further claims that he is a steadfast advocate of corporal punishment, saying that it invariably succeeds in reforming the girls where other methods fail. He also says that the state’s own methods of soft-glove psychology fail with delinquents, and that “as many as fifty percent of the girls treated in this manner return to crime”.

Besides spanking and the other punishments for breaking the rules, the régime itself is arduous. The girls get up at five in the morning and eat breakfast—after saying their prayers—to the sound of hymns played over loudspeakers. The long hours of work, prayer and study continue throughout the day and evening, finishing just before midnight each night. Mr. Roloff claims that this exhausting and regimented existence causes girls to change remarkably quickly, and that they soon learn “with God’s grace and strength, that they can emerge to live just like everyone else”.

After their term of reform has ended the girls ‘graduate’. Before their assembled families and friends they queue, dressed in long white gowns, to receive ‘graduation Bibles’ from Mr. Roloff.



### ***The outer fringes***

More extreme even than 'old-fashioned' Southern Baptists like the Rev. Roloff in their use of corporal punishment are the 'lunatic fringe' religious cults that thrive in the U.S.A. today.

In 1984, State troopers in the liberal Northern state of Vermont raided the headquarters of the North East Kingdom Community Church to investigate allegations that members caned their children until they bled for offences ranging from lying to asking for second helpings at meals\*. Britain's *Daily Telegraph* quoted one church elder as saying: "We are going to raise a lost generation unless they are properly spanked."

One fourteen-year-old girl, speaking to television reporters, told how she was caned until she cried out that she couldn't take any more, to which the elders replied, simply, "You can."

In the wake of the siege of David Koresh's cult headquarters in Waco, Texas, medical staff spotted welts on the bottoms of some of the surviving girls. On questioning, the girls revealed that they would be punished with a wooden paddle, which Mr. Koresh called 'The Helper', for offences as slight as spilling milk.

### ***Corporal punishment gone wrong***

These extreme cases point to the fact that whatever may be said for the positive effects of corporal punishment used in the 'right' way, it can be—and manifestly is—used in a way which by all normal standards is very wrong indeed. The next two chapters are devoted to the problems associated with corporal punishment.

\* Although, as the author points out elsewhere, one should be wary of accepting tendentious reports at face value, especially when they are directed against groups being demonised and branded as 'lunatic fringe' by a society whose own claim to sanity is far from impeccable. Certainly the practice of using military force to crush civilian communities which choose an unfavoured way of life seems sinister in the extreme.

# THE TWENTY TOP-CANING SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

<i>School &amp; age range</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Canings per 100 pupils</i>
Elmbridge, Cranleigh (11-16)	Boys' county boarding	294.8
St. Mary's, Trafford (11-16)	Catholic boys'	176.4
Litherland, Sefton (11-18)	Mixed comprehensive	152.3
Bacon's, Rotherhithe (11-18)	Mixed comprehensive	68.9
Unnamed school X, Slough (?), Berks	Mixed secondary modern (?)	62.3
Eastmoor, Wakefield (13-16)	Mixed comprehensive	61.5
Unnamed, Manchester (11-18)	Comprehensive	53.1
Unnamed Y, Berks (8-12?)	Mixed middle	31.6
St. Aidan's, Wallsend (13-18)	Catholic mixed comprehensive	29.8
Saintbridge, Gloucester (11-19)	Boys' comprehensive	28.8
Oxstalls, Gloucester (11-16)	Boys' secondary modern	28.7
Purley High, Croydon (14-18)	Boys' comprehensive	28
Sir G. Monoux High School, Waltham Forest (14-18)	Boys' comprehensive	26.9
Gayton, Harrow (12-16)	Boys' comprehensive	25.8
St. Cuthbert's, Newcastle (11-18)	Catholic boys' comprehensive	25.7
Little Heath, Romford (12-16)	Special	24.8
Armthorpe, Doncaster (11-18)	Mixed comprehensive	24.6
Hucclecote, Gloucester (11-16)	Mixed secondary modern	23.2
Ralph Gardner, North Shields (11-16)	Mixed comprehensive	23.1



# *The Problem of Over-use*

## *Heavy-caning schools*

Most British schools, prior to abolition, used the cane sparingly. It was kept in reserve as the final sanction for serious offences. A minority of schools, however, used it far more liberally. Pupils would be caned for talking, for first offences of lateness, for running in corridors and most minor infractions of school rules.

Boys were far more likely than girls to be subject to a heavy caning régime: eight out of the twenty top-caning schools were boys' schools, and of the remainder a high proportion (including Litherland, the number three school) did not beat girls under any circumstances.

However, some girls *were* subject to frequent-caning régimes at British schools and continue to be subject to such régimes in the U.S.A.. In particular the number four British caning school, Bacon's, caned more girls per year than any other school in the country.

### *The problem with heavy-caning schools*

There is evidence, discussed later in this book, to suggest that many light-caning schools had fewer discipline problems, particularly problems with 'persistent low-level misbehaviour' than similar non-caning schools, and than they themselves had after abolition. On this basis it might seem reasonable to assume that the strictest schools at the top of the caning league-tables would have had even fewer discipline problems. This was not the case.

The evidence points to the conclusion that over-use of corporal punishment is not only resented by the pupils who are subject to it (as might be suspected) but that the schools that administer it are not particularly successful or well-disciplined.

## ***Some questionable reasons for using corporal punishment***

### ***(1) 'Making a flippant remark'***

At Bedwas Comprehensive School in Glamorganshire, a class captain was caned for making a flippant remark to her class teacher and for leaving school when she heard that she was to be caned. According to the teacher who administers corporal punishment to girls at Bedwas School, the girl had caused no problems whatsoever during the preceding twelve months.

### ***(2) Having buttons undone***

A parent reported to S.T.O.P.P. that a headmistress slipped four sixteen-year-old girls' bottoms for having the top buttons of their blouses undone.

### ***(3) Wearing trousers***

Fifteen teenage girls who wore pantsuits to their Kentucky school were told to choose between being suspended or being spanked with a wooden paddle by the middle-aged headmaster.

The girls arrived at the Johnson Central High School in Paintsville, saying that they wore the pantsuits because of the cold. One of the girls, sixteen-year-old Irene Preston, said that the dress code was ridiculous. "They expect us to dress like [*sic*] our grandmothers did," she said. Having been spanked by the headmaster before, she said that she would rather give up school than be punished by him again. "He hits so hard you can't sit down for the rest of the day."

In a telephone conversation with reporters, headmaster Willis Conley said, "Paddling is the only language some of these kids understand." He said that the girls had purposely worn the slacks to defy him.

"They would get paddled five or ten times each or they wouldn't stay at the school," he said. "You can say that I'm old-fashioned but I don't want a school full of mini-skirts and slacks. There is a wrong way and a right way to do your learning at school."

He said that he did not think the girls were too old to be spanked, although one was seventeen. "As long as they break the rules, they are never too old," he said.

Sixteen-year-old Diana Nichols, vice-president of the school council, said she was making an appeal for the girls. "Maybe they should be punished, but this is too much," she said.

"I'll just keep on spanking them till the message gets through," said Mr. Conley.

### ***Japan's caning schools***

Japan has a constitution, imposed upon it by the U.S.A. at the end of the Second World War, which expressly forbids the use of corporal punishment in schools. Despite this fact, caning and other physical punishments are extremely commonplace and, apparently, they are becoming even more so. The Japanese Justice ministry reported a doubling of the reported incidence of corporal punishment between 1986 and 1990.

Rather than a final sanction for the most serious offences, corporal punishment is seen by many Japanese teachers as a way of enforcing the countless strict and inflexible rules that govern every aspect of school life, from the number of pleats permitted in a skirt to the 'right' hair-length of hair (to the centimetre) and the type and width of belt worn.

The aim is to produce a conformity and group cohesion which, to Western eyes, seems overpowering; and to achieve this by using punishment with a zeal which seems to us to go beyond all reasonable limits.

The Japanese have an analogy of individual pupils as being like nails in a plank of wood: when all of the nails are flush to the plank, the wood is strong and firmly fixed; but where one nail-head stands out it must be hammered hard until it is like the rest.

The Justice Ministry's report describes the case of a girl who was given thirty strokes of the cane simply for bringing a hairdryer into school. 'Getting hit', according to one girl interviewed by an American newspaper, is so routine that pupils just accept it.

### ***The heavy-caning attitude***

A punishment at a light-caning school is an *event*. It is whispered about in classrooms and discussed and gossiped about in the playground and the staff room. The pupil to be punished is sent, silent

and shamefaced, to the Head's office while the school holds its breath. Heavy-caning schools have a different attitude altogether. Canings and slipperings are administered routinely and matter-of-factly with scarcely an eyebrow raised.

In S.T.O.P.P.'s book *A Last Resort*, a teacher described a typical term at a heavy-caning school:

"Slight policy change in recent weeks. Head insists that all caning be recorded and all personal canes handed in—prior to this the majority of canings went unrecorded. At a recent assembly: Deputy Head on stage wielding the cane. Two girls called out to back of hall for evading assembly the previous night. Audible caning whilst the school waited—then 'We will now sing hymn number...' Another incident: one teacher threatened small, timorous girl with the cane for 'not paying attention': pretended to cane her—but missed—leaving her shocked and crying."

### ***The problems with frequent punishment***

#### ***(1) The spiral of truancy***

When corporal punishment becomes a regular feature of classroom life rather than a sparingly-used final sanction, pupils begin to dread going to school. For some pupils—and many girls fall into this category—this results in increased truancy levels. This in turn leads to more punishment, more dread and more truancy\*.

Truancy was a problem at Bacon's School in London's Docklands, a 1,000-pupil Church of England secondary school which was identified in the late '70s as one of the Inner London Education Authority's 'top-caning' comprehensives. On average, a pupil was caned at the school once every two hours. More than two hundred canings were given to girls in one school year, and a fifth of all the girls were caned at least once. Twenty-six girls were caned more than three times that year.

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\*Although one must use caution in the interpretation of this evidence. Truancy was not a notable problem in Scotland where corporal punishment was far more of an everyday occurrence than in English schools. In a dockland school one must ask whether truancy and other behavioural problems were prompted by heavy corporal punishment or *vice versa*.

One of the most-caned girls at the school, fourteen-year-old Sue Olds, eventually left Bacon's after refusing to accept another caning for truancy. Interviewed by the *London Evening Standard* she said:

"I cannot go back there. I have been warned I will be caned and I can't stand it again. I want to go to another school. They have caned me six or seven times at Bacon's—once in front of some boys—and every time I get ill."

### (2) *Indifference to punishment*

For some pupils the result of frequent punishment is that they become hardened and indifferent to the prospect of being beaten. The 'ultimate sanction' is no longer an effective means of maintaining discipline and misbehaviour becomes harder to control.

Boys at Litherland School, for example, were punished so often—both by 'official' canings and by unofficial classroom slippings—that they instituted a competition amongst themselves. Each boy would pay a small sum to one of their number chosen as a 'banker' and then go out of his way to misbehave. At the end of the week, the boy who had achieved the most punishments would win the money. In some classes the role of banker would be filled by a girl, who, as a 'neutral' outsider not subject to corporal punishment, would be trusted to keep the tally more accurately without the temptation to overestimate her own score.

### (3) *'Punishment inflation'*

Where pupils are beaten frequently for minor misdeeds, the cane becomes less of a feared deterrent and more of a fact of life. The attitude amongst some pupils becomes one of 'as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb': that they are going to be caned anyway, and it matters little now that they are used to being caned; so they might as well at least have some fun in the process.

This, in turn, results in ever more severe and extreme punishments being administered to pupils for ever more petty reasons in an attempt to keep things under control. The result is a school of Dickensian severity which brutalises pupils and staff alike.

In her book *Child of a System*, Noele Arden describes her experiences in Britain's reformatories in the middle years of this century:

I was packed off to a remand home near Chelmsford in Essex. I think it was called Newport House. As we went through the large doors, I was greeted by a very large masculine-looking woman dressed in a navy skirt and jacket. She wore her grey hair in an Eton Crop. I immediately felt afraid of her. I was taken into a small room and my clothing was taken away. My hair was examined for nits, and then I was checked over by an elderly doctor and passed as fit. They gave me a school uniform, which was a white blouse, grey skirt and jersey, grey socks and black lace-up shoes, and a navy raincoat. This was everyday wear. Sunday best was a print dress and white ankle-socks, a straw hat and a blazer. The food was good and clean, and there were only a few girls in the home. But I did not like it and hated the strict discipline, and even more Miss Asps, the headmistress. What I actually did to merit the punishments they gave me I cannot remember but I do clearly recall being on the receiving end of a cane, both on my hands and my backside.

I arrived at the approved school, which was called St. Christopher's Place, just outside Liverpool. As usual, my first feeling was one of fear, and this time it was more justified than usual. Before leaving Chelmsford I do recall the headmistress of the remand home telling me that I would have to behave myself in the place I was going to. I found it very hard, especially since punishment at St. Christopher's seemed to be given for the slightest misdemeanour. One of the nastiest punishments was to have to scrub the outside yard with a sort of brick. This made your fingers bleed and caused chaps, which were very painful.

Inside the building I can remember only three rooms. There was a large hall, with lockers that did not lock, a mess room and, of course, the unforgettable detention room that all these places seemed to have. As the lockers had no locks, it seemed to be a free-for-all. I remember losing my St. Christopher's ring, also my precious Kaleidoscope, and after even the most enterprising search neither of them was found. This upset me and because of the fuss I made I got the cane in front of the entire school, though on this occasion only on my hands.

A girl and I ran away. We got into Liverpool, and to a place

called Oriel Road, where the girl lived. Her mother gave us something to eat and then, in spite of her daughter's pleading, called the police.

Back at St. Christopher's we were taken before the entire school, and there we were stripped to our knickers and vests, then put across a chair, had our knickers pulled down and were caned across the backside. Needless to say I kicked and screamed and was taken to the detention room . . . where I was put on a bread and water diet.

## *Excessive Severity and other Complications*

MANY of the examples of the over-use of corporal punishment given in the last chapter could be said, at a push, to fall within the letter—if not the spirit—of the *in loco parentis* ruling. The teachers involved could claim to have done it “for the purpose of correcting what is evil in the child” rather than “for the gratification of passion or rage,” and, with the possible exception of the canings at the Liverpool reformatory, they were generally not “immoderate in degree, protracted beyond the child’s powers of endurance or calculated to produce danger to life or limb.” That is not to say that the punishments were right, or that they were good educational practice: it is perhaps more true to say that the teachers were foolish and mistaken in dishing out canings at the slightest provocation and so devaluing what ought to have been a last resort. In the end they probably caused more trouble than they were attempting to control.

However, there is a more serious problem with corporal punishment in practice: it is that certain teachers, whether through ignorance or malice, administer punishments which are quite clearly outside the definition of a reasonable *in loco parentis* correction, and often outside bounds of legality and decency. In studying these punishments, one common factor comes up time and time again; and that common factor is the involvement of men in the punishment of adolescent girls.

In its final chapters, this book discusses the case for a limited reintroduction of corporal punishment into schools, as a last resort; but whatever the outcome of the pro- and anti-corporal punishment debate, it is to be hoped that both sides will agree on one thing: that men should not be allowed to beat young girls.

### *Not knowing their own strength?*

Because of the difference in size and strength between a schoolgirl and a fully-grown man, girls can suffer quite severe injuries from what the man believes to be a ‘reasonable’ punishment.



Shelley Gahsperson, a seventeen-year-old pupil at Dunn High School in North Carolina, was paddled by her male assistant principal for truancy. On the face of it, he did everything by the book.

He didn't set out to paddle the girl. He was content for her to have a non-corporal punishment—six days of detention or 'in-school suspension'—and only brought up the question of corporal punishment when Shelley asked for an alternative to the detention. He allowed her time to discuss the matter with her parents and only proceeded with the spanking after Shelley asked for it. Even when she cried out during the paddling, she was told that she could be excused the rest of the strokes and go back to a detention equivalent in proportion to the number of strokes left; but she asked for him to continue and get it over with.

It just so happened that the assistant principal was a six foot two, fourteen stone football coach with a serious forearm swing; and the result was that Shelley was beaten black and blue.

### ***Evidence of Shelley Gahsperson to the Senate sub-committee on corporal punishment***

**Senator Specter:** How old are you, Shelley?

**Miss Gahsperson:** I am twenty years old.

**Senator Specter:** And this experience occurred several years ago, when you were seventeen?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** What school were you attending at that time?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Dunn High School in Dunn, North Carolina.

**Senator Specter:** All right. In your own way, proceed to tell us what occurred.

**Miss Gahsperson:** Okay. Mr Chairman, first I would like to thank you for inviting me here to speak on the issue of corporal punishment.

It was December 1981, when I skipped school for the first time since I had been in school at all. When I returned to school the next day, I was put in a program called In-

School Suspension. In that program, the teachers are to bring you your schoolwork and give you homework, so you can keep up with your studies. I was put in In-School Suspension for six days, and I stayed there for three days. In that time, I did not receive the homework I needed to keep up with my studies, and I became concerned about that, because I was a delegate for a scholarship at the University of North Carolina.

I spoke to the Assistant Principal at the school about this, and he told me that he was not involved with the teachers and was not responsible for their duties. And I asked him for an alternative to the punishment they had given me, and he told me that I could receive corporal punishment as an alternative. He told me that it would be three thrashes for each day that I would get out early, which would be nine for the three days I would get out early.

The next day I went to see him to get that alternative, and he said he would cut it down to six—just to be nice, I suppose: I don't know.

I received the beating. I could not take all six of them at one time. It was about two at a time, because the pain was so terrible.

**Senator Specter:** When you say you took the beating, who was it who inflicted the punishment?

**Miss Gahsperson:** The assistant principal.

**Senator Specter:** And what did he use to inflict the punishment?

**Miss Gahsperson:** It was a wooden paddle: I would say about so long, and about that wide.

**Senator Specter:** You are describing a paddle about two feet long and about six inches wide.

**Miss Gahsperson:** That is right.

**Senator Specter:** And how thick?

**Miss Gahsperson:** A quarter-inch, I would imagine.

**Senator Specter:** And where were you struck?

**Miss Gahsperson:** On my buttocks.

**Senator Specter:** And what position were you in when

you were struck?

**Miss Gahsperson:** I was leaning onto a counter top, bent over, and he was standing behind me.

**Senator Specter:** You were struck on the buttocks, leaning over a counter top, and he stood behind you and had a board about two feet by six inches by a quarter of an inch in thickness?

**Miss Gahsperson:** That is correct.

**Senator Specter:** And how many times were you struck?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Six times.

**Senator Specter:** Six times—all at once?

**Miss Gahsperson:** No: two at a time. And there were two other girls also being beaten at the same time, and we alternated in between the three of us, two beatings at a time.

**Senator Specter:** So you were struck twice, then there was an interval of time, then you were struck again?

**Miss Gahsperson:** That is correct.

**Senator Specter:** And was there a second interval of time, and then you were struck twice after that?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** And how many other young women were being subjected to the same punishment at that time?

**Miss Gahsperson:** There were two others.

**Senator Specter:** And what had they done, if you know?

**Miss Gahsperson:** They had also skipped school. However, it wasn't for the first time.

**Senator Specter:** Now, you had skipped school, which led to this punishment?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** And how many times had you skipped school?

**Miss Gahsperson:** This was the first occasion.

**Senator Specter:** On this occasion, you skipped school for how many days?

**Miss Gahsperson:** One day.

**Senator Specter:** One day. What was your reason for skipping school on that day?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Well, the girl that I rode to school with had a problem with her boyfriend—she was one of the other girls who skipped school—and I told her I would leave school with her and go and find her boyfriend.

**Senator Specter:** So, you spent the day with your girlfriend, who had a problem with her boyfriend?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** And the first punishment which was given to you was a suspension from school—for how many days again?

**Miss Gahsperson:** That was an In-School Suspension, for six days. It was a program where you would go into the classroom and stay there all day, and the teachers brought you your schoolwork into this one classroom. It was isolation from the rest of the school.

**Senator Specter:** But you found that unsatisfactory because you could not keep up with your scholarship program?

**Miss Gahsperson:** I could not keep up with my work, and I was sitting in the classroom doing practically nothing.

**Senator Specter:** Why weren't you getting your homework to do? Why couldn't that be worked out?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Well, the teacher that was the head of the room was to get the assignments, and for a couple of days she was out. We had a substitute, and she really did not know what she was doing. I did get some homework, but it just wasn't enough. And I also had a calculus course at that time, where there were only three other students besides me in that class, and they went relatively fast in the course, and without a teacher I was falling behind; I really could not teach the calculus to myself.

**Senator Specter:** Did you discuss this decision to have corporal punishment as an alternative—did you discuss that with your parents before having it?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, I did, and they told me under no circumstances to do it. I talked to them about it after the second day, and they said not to do it, and I went back and still, after getting no assignments, I decided on my own to go ahead and get it.

**Senator Specter:** So you disregarded your parents' instructions on it?

**Miss Gahsperson:** That is right.

**Senator Specter:** Did the school officials confer with your parents before administering the corporal punishment?

**Miss Gahsperson:** No, they did not.

**Senator Specter:** How big was the assistant principal who did the whipping?

**Miss Gahsperson:** I would say about six two, two hundred pounds. He is an assistant football coach.

**Senator Specter:** An assistant football coach, and a pretty big man?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** And you took two of those whacks at a time?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** You were fully clothed at this time?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** How did it feel.

**Miss Gahsperson:** I had never, ever been hit like that before. It was the worst pain I have ever felt in my life.

**Senator Specter:** Did you protest?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, I did.

**Senator Specter:** What did he say?

**Miss Gahsperson:** He said I could go back to In-School Suspension, but that would not resolve my problem, so he went ahead with it.

**Senator Specter:** And you took six of those whacks all on the same day?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, sir.

**Senator Specter:** Did you sustain any injuries as a

result of the beating?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Yes, I did.

**Senator Specter:** What injuries?

**Miss Gahsperson:** Both my buttocks were severely bruised.

### ***Unnecessary humiliation***

Beyond mere brute force and physical severity, punishments can be made unnecessarily cruel by the addition of public humiliation. To some extent all punishments—whether corporal or otherwise—are humiliating. That they are unpleasant and embarrassing to receive is what makes them punishments.

However, in some punishments the element of shame is heightened to an extreme level. In general, girls are far less likely to be treated in this way than are boys, even where they are subject to corporal punishment; but very occasionally, girls are subject to very serious humiliation indeed.

In Britain, South Africa, Australia and in much of the English-speaking world, girls are frequently protected from many of the stricter kinds of treatment to which boys are routinely subjected. To give an everyday example, girls are commonly called by their first names in British schools where boys are called by their surnames.

The fact that girls are most commonly caned on the hand can be argued to be less to do with the degree of pain or damage caused (in fact, a caning across the hand carries far more risk of injury than one across the bottom) than with the fact that it is less undignified.

Whilst public beatings of girls are extremely rare, it was moderately common in Britain's heavy-caning schools for boys to be caned in public, and in front of mixed-sex audiences. Typically, these canings would be carried out in front of a boy's class or, more dramatically, in front of his entire school. The author can give first-hand confirmation of this, having seen boys at her own school caned in morning assembly watched by several hundred teenage girls and boys in the mid-nineteen seventies. In one Catholic school in North-West England in 1983, a mass caning was held in which, according to S.T.O.P.P.:

"All the third and fourth year boys were caned in front of the

entire school for some breach of discipline. They were paraded through the assembly hall for the canings.”

The public beating entered the age of technology in the early 'nineties in America, when the principal of Hillcrest Elementary School in Troy, Tennessee—who was eventually reprimanded by his superiors—used the school public address system, turned up to full volume, to broadcast the sound of three boys being paddled in his study around the school. The boys, a third-grader, a fourth-grader and a sixth-grader, had been misbehaving on the school bus.

Where girls *are* humiliated, it tends to be less extreme than the humiliations that boys suffer. At Tudor House School, for example, a girls' private school in England, senior girls were caned in private for extreme misbehaviour until the late 1980s, but were—and are—punished for certain other forms of bad behaviour with a minor humiliation: they are made to wear Lower School uniform for a day or two.

The most extreme humiliations, however, seem to occur almost as a matter of routine in Japan. The Japanese Justice Ministry's 1991 report on corporal punishment mentions, for example, a female gym teacher who caned seven boys across their bare buttocks in front of a mixed class because they were 'not seriously participating'.

In another case a high school girl in the rural Shimane prefecture attempted suicide after having her bottom caned by a teacher and then being made to remove her skirt and clean the corridor in her underwear.

### *A level of impropriety*

Beyond simply hitting too hard, or even causing pain and humiliation, there are punishments which appear to have a third and still more serious dimension to them.

One example of such a punishment is the paddling given on January 24th, 1984 by Frederick P. McCracken, a sixth-grade teacher at Fountain Elementary School in the Roseville School District, Minnesota, to Kirsti Haugh, an eleven year-old girl in his class for the 'offence' of chewing gum.

The first thing to be said is that the spanking was outrageously

severe for such a minor breach of rules. The second is that it was grossly humiliating, in that after paddling the girl himself, Mr. McCracken allowed each of her twenty-five classmates to beat her too. But more than these, Mr. McCracken's conduct and motives during the spanking were decidedly suspect.

The severity of it: as a result of her spanking Kirsti was treated at South Macomb hospital for what doctors described as 'severe bruises' to her bottom.

Kirsti's father, Harold Haugh, said that the paddle was drilled with holes and wrapped around its perimeter and handle with black tape. The holes—banned by many school districts—increase the pain of a paddling by increasing its velocity through the air and by drawing up and 'blistering' the flesh of the buttocks on impact.

The humiliation: after Mr. McCracken had used this paddle, all but three of Kirsti's classmates lined up in front of the classroom and each struck her once on the backside. The three who refused were Kirsti's friends from her cheer-leading squad. Kirsti came home half an hour late on the day of the incident, explaining that she had been crying in a school lavatory.

The signs of suspicious motives: Kirsti was one of the prettier, more sporty girls in her class; she was also typically well-behaved and high-achieving; she was unfairly 'marked out' from the rest of the class for unusually severe treatment; and the punishment was carried out in an unusual manner. These are all characteristics shared by a number of very unusual punishments carried out almost exclusively by male teachers on pretty young girls.

### ***Characteristics of a 'suspicious' punishment***

*Pretty and sporty:* Kirsti was captain of the girls' basketball and cheer-leading squads. It is remarkable that cheerleaders are unusually well-represented amongst the reported cases of 'abusive' punishments in American schools.

*Well-behaved and high-achieving:* Kirsti was an all A-grade honours student. In another incident in North Carolina, according to the abolitionist society E.V.A.N.-G., a male teacher paddled a sixteen-year-old female honours student across the bottom for an unex-



cused absence. She had previously had an unblemished record at the school. While the teacher was spanking her, a male colleague walked into the office and remarked 'give her one for me'.

*Unfairly 'marked out':* "She didn't even know there was a rule against chewing gum," said Kirsti's father. Furthermore, the girl had never known of any other pupils being treated in the way she had been:

"She said this was the first time that she knew of that the other pupils were allowed to use the paddle. She said other kids had been paddled, but this was the first time the whole class had paddled anybody."

Similar cases of unusual treatment of individual pupils have been reported in English schools, particularly where men are allowed to punish girls. The mother of a nine-year-old girl at a Church of England primary school in Greater London, for example, told S.T.O.P.P. that: "My daughter's teacher keeps picking on her. On a number of occasions he singled her out of a group of children who were talking and slapped her across the backside or hit her with a ruler on the knuckles."

*Carried out in an unusual—and frequently humiliating—manner:*

In Kirsti's case, she received an unusually severe public spanking at the hands of her male teacher, who then stood back and watched her being spanked by her classmates. He also paid unusual attention to the paddle itself, 'customising' it with holes and tape.

This customising of punishment implements is found in other cases. Philip Oakeshot, Head of Thornden Comprehensive in Chandler's Ford near Southampton, admitted to the local press that his preferred weapon for beating girls was a 'ruler' which in fact consisted of four wooden rulers sellotaped together. It was apparent that he had been experimenting with the weight and structure of his implement to get just the 'right' degree of impact. In one incident in 1986 he used it on two thirteen year-old girls whose 'offence' was chasing around a table in a classroom at lunch time and one girl's hand was swollen and marked for some days as a result.

Humiliation features strongly in many of these cases. At Honiton

Grammar School—a school where girls were generally punished by being caned across the hands—the head was successfully prosecuted after he punished a senior girl by making her bend her over his knee and then spanking her bottom; and on the 4th of October 1994, the *Daily Telegraph* reported the case of 34-year-old Kevin Booth, headmaster of Greybrook School, a private secondary school in the Northumberland fishing village of Newbiggin-on-sea, who was given a three-month suspended sentence at Newcastle Crown Court after stripping and horsewhipping girls at his school when they failed to get their sums right.

His G.C.S.E. pupils—who, apart from one local girl, were mainly the children of overseas professionals—had to touch their toes before being whipped, either with a crop, a cane or an eighteen-inch ruler; and were then made to thank Mr. Booth.

Mr. Booth's methods came to light in 1991 when a doctor's daughter walked into an Islington police station with her mother and made a complaint about her treatment. As a result, he was charged with four counts of assault.

### ***“for the gratification of passion or rage”***

Perhaps the most striking case of ‘suspicious’ punishment concerns Colin West, head of lower school at St. Aidan's in Cumberland, who was given a six-month suspended sentence in 1983 after going to the homes of three teenage girls of thirteen and fourteen years of age, persuading their mothers to make them change into their nightdresses and then slippering them across their bare bottoms.

He took with him a ‘punishment kit’ consisting of the training shoe and a tube of antiseptic cream, which he took to the girls’ homes in a shoebox. The two younger girls were hit six times on the buttocks with a training shoe for shoplifting. The fourteen-year-old was given two strokes for ‘not working to the best of her ability’. After slippering the girls, Mr. West was alleged to have rubbed their bottoms with the antiseptic cream.

Mr. Roy Marriott, the local authority's Assistant Director of Education, told the court of a meeting he had with West: “He (Mr. West) had agreed with the parents to take the older girl to his home for a couple of weeks to help modify her behaviour. He said that

parents of other children would be alleging that he had bathed the girl and rubbed cream on her bottom. He said he had done this but there was nothing improper about it. He said it was how he would have treated a daughter of his own... He said that he had already consulted his solicitor with a view to threaten legal action if the parents persisted in making these allegations against him."

The judge described Mr. West's actions as a 'gross abuse' of his authority. West was found guilty of three charges of assault and given a six-month suspended sentence. Originally he was found guilty of one assault and acquitted on three charges (two of indecent assault and one of assault occasioning actual bodily harm). The jury failed to agree on six charges, and a re-trial had been expected. However, Mr. West changed his plea on the two remaining assault charges to guilty. Four outstanding indecent assault charges were left on file, as was one against Mr. West's wife of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

During the trial, the *Cumberland Evening News and Star* reported:

"...the court was told by one mother, whose daughter had been spanked for shoplifting, that Mr. West seemed excited by the beating. 'It was brutal', she said. Another mother whose daughter was also punished for shoplifting said, 'He seemed to enjoy it but I don't know what he was feeling inside.'"

In the same report, a fourteen-year-old girl, who had allegedly been told to report to West for not wearing the full school uniform, was quoted as saying:

"He dragged me into his office and slammed the door behind him. He said 'I am going to teach you a lesson.' He slapped me across the face. I started crying. He pushed me by my throat and I fell back against the bookcase. He pulled me by my arm and put me over his knee. He was kneeling on the floor. He pulled my skirt up and hit me about twice. Then he pulled my knickers down. He hit me across my bare bottom."

The girl claimed that later Mr. West "put his hands on my shoulder and said, 'I love you more than any other pupil in this school', although Mr. West denied this.

Mr. West told the police that all 'corporal punishment' was recorded in the school's punishment book, which had disappeared.

He denied he had taken the book.

The mother of one of the girls assaulted by Mr. West was quoted as saying: "What Mr. West did was to turn my daughter into a rebel and it ruined her education. The last three years have been a torment to us all." She added: "West tried to twist everything that the girls said".

Apparently Mr. West left the country after the trial.

## *Abusive punishments in perspective*

### *A case to answer*

As the next chapter demonstrates, not all cases of apparent abuse turn out to be so clear-cut when you look at them more closely. Nevertheless, it is quite plain to see that real abuses of corporal punishment can and do happen. People like Colin West and Kevin Booth represent the strongest case that the supporters of corporal punishment have to answer.

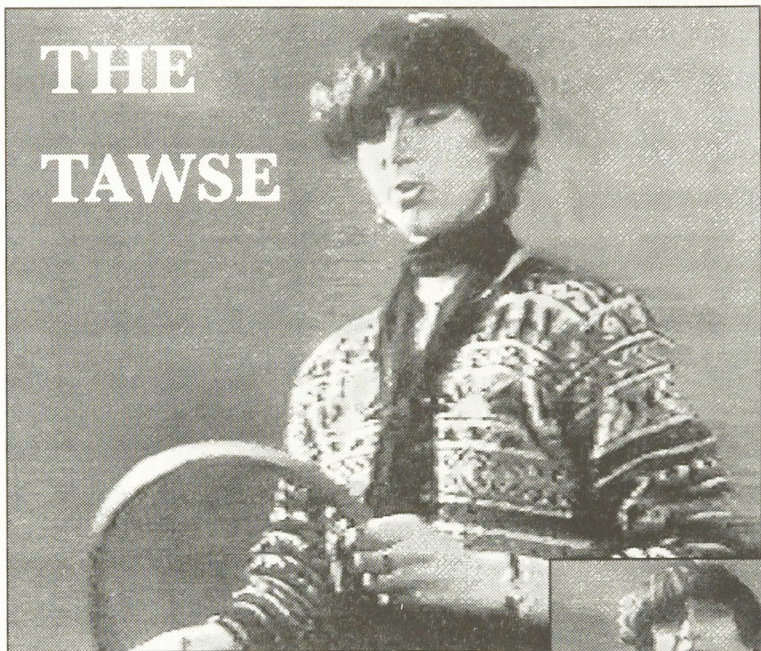
One way to approach it might be to argue that what these men did to the girls in their care was wicked and illegal even in a society that condones corporal punishment, and that they were quite rightly prosecuted for their actions; it *might* be possible to argue that they represent only a tiny minority of extreme, headline-grabbing cases and that the vast majority of school punishments are nothing like what they did; and it *might* be possible to argue that corporal punishment properly controlled and administered can have a beneficial effect on a school; but the fact remains that they were able to do what they did, whatever the technicalities of the *in loco parentis* ruling, and that others like them may have committed similar crimes and got away with it.

As it was, West received a six-month suspended sentence—a non-punishment. Booth fared even better with a three-month one.

If these things are to be avoided in the future there is really only one option: to remove the temptation and the opportunity for people like West and Booth. This means one of two things: either that corporal punishment should be banned, or that male teachers should be banned from punishing girls under any circumstances.



# THE TAWSE



*On B.B.C. Scotland's "Current Account" programme in March 1981, Miss Valerie Thornton (pictured here), a former Scottish schoolmistress, gave an account and demonstration of the use of the tawse to interviewer Sally Magnusson:*



*"You get them to pull their cuffs over their wrists so you don't injure their wrists... then you put the belt over your shoulder and line yourself up..."*

*Her description tallies closely with the more formal instructions in The Female Disciplinary Manual:*

*"The traditional Scottish method for delivering the*



strokes cannot be bettered. The mistress stands in position, that is, either to the side for a cross-palm stroke, or directly in front of the pupil and lets the strap fall behind her shoulder and down her back. Her hand rests lightly upon her shoulder with her forearm and elbow against her chest. At the



commencement of the stroke she brings her hand sharply down moving only her forearm and keeping her elbow against her body.

The strap describes an arc in the air, its weight and the swift movement of the mistress's arm ensuring that it lands with a resounding crack.

With a little practice great accuracy can be produced as the strap itself does the work. It is important to stand well away from the pupil allowing plenty of room for the length of the strap and the length of the forearm."



## *The Question of Bias*

CORPORAL punishment isn't a 'neutral' subject. Whether talking or writing, people tend to have strong views on the subject. Because of this it is hard to be sure that what one reads about it gives a full and true picture of what actually happened. For one thing, most 'typical' school punishments never find their way into print. For another thing, parents who feel that their children's punishments were deserved and beneficial tend not to complain. The cases that do find their way into print—and on which much of this book has been based—are by their very nature unusual. More often than not the most widely-publicised cases are the ones that have been pushed into the full glare of media attention by people with one of two points to prove: either that corporal punishment is a brutal archaism which ought to be banned immediately, or that it is the only thing that can save us from the end of civilisation as we know it.

The case of Tammy (or Tamara May) Torbert—the girl strapped at school in Texas by her mother—has already been mentioned. Two reports of the case were used in writing this book: one came from the typically Texan and pro-corporal-punishment local paper; the other from the weighty, anti-corporal-punishment academic tome *Corporal Punishment in American Education*. On a superficial level, the style of writing was different: the local paper, for example, called the girl by her 'everyday' name, the academics by her full name. But on a deeper level there was disagreement between interpretations of the same facts, and even disagreement on the facts themselves.

The local paper reported that Mrs. Torbert's petition against paddling was eclipsed by a much bigger petition signed by staff, pupils and parents in favour of it. The academics acknowledged the fact but claimed that many of the pro-spanking signatories were *forced* to sign it.

The local paper reported that Mrs. Torbert gave her daughter ten hard strokes with the belt and quoted an assistant principal afterwards as saying that she would have been better off taking a paddling: the academics say the girl was given a few light taps.

You pays your money and you takes your choice. My own view, for what it's worth, is that the truth of the matter lies somewhere mid-way between the two reports. Mrs. Torbert managed to get her daughter out of a paddling only by agreeing to punish her herself; and because of this she would have had to hit the girl hard enough to persuade the teachers who were there as witnesses that she *was* being punished. She would also, on the other hand, have wanted to avoid the severity of a paddling. So, it was likely to have been hard enough to hurt—or at the least hard enough to *look* as if it hurt—but, given Mrs. Torbert's objections to the severity of paddling, probably not hard enough to do any real damage.

As for the assistant principal's comments, it seems probable that they were either journalistic licence (which is to say, made up by the paper) or that they were bravado on the part of staff (meaning 'look what happens if you refuse to be paddled: you get hurt worse').

Finally, in the matter of the petition, the local paper seems somewhat more credible than that of the academics. There was probably some pressure from the principal for the school's staff to sign but, Texans being Texans, it is highly unlikely that large numbers of parents and local people could be forced to sign a petition in favour of corporal punishment that they didn't agree with.

Other stories raise questions: it is also difficult to know, for example, what to make of the Rev. Roloff's claims that the short, sharp shock regime of the Rebekah Home for Girls has a hundred-percent success rate in turning Texas's hardened girl delinquents into mild-mannered Bible-carrying Good Wives. People with an axe to grind do have a habit of plucking statistics out of thin air, or of 'manipulating' the numbers to tell whatever story they want them to. Seventy percent would be impressive, eighty remarkable but a hundred seems, on the face of it, to be stretching credulity a little too far.

Even when the reporting of the facts of a case is accurate, there is a strong tendency to read what one wants to read into them. Amongst those in favour of corporal punishment, for example, it is common to see a spanking as an almost miraculous cure-all rather than as a simple educational tool, and to attribute every good action by the child afterwards to its 'beneficial' effects; whilst for abolitionists, it is seen to be responsible for every problem and bad action.



In April 1994, the photojournalist Sophie Baker described in *The Independent on Sunday* how the staff of her boarding-school attributed her later successes to a slippering the Head gave her:

"I was summoned to the headmaster's office after lights-out and told to bring my slippers. The headmaster bent me over his knee and spanked me in front of his wife and assistant. Whenever I was good afterwards, they always referred to the beating as the reason, saying things like 'Well, that was obviously just what you needed, wasn't it?'"

As well as the bias that comes from people consciously or unconsciously distorting the facts to suit their beliefs, there are occasions when inaccurate reporting creeps in by accident. It is a fact of life that people of different ideological persuasions often speak different languages. At the two ends of the spectrum, to make a huge sweeping statement to which there are no doubt many exceptions, the more extreme fundamentalists and the abolitionists tend to be very earnest and worthy people who choose their words very carefully and use them rather literally, while those in the middle tend to be more cavalier about language. American abolitionists, in particular, don't tend to go in for flippant or ironic humour to any great extent, particularly when it comes to things that they believe in.

So it was that horrified reports came to be published about a High School Principal in Tecumseh, Oklahoma, whose staff, it seemed, made teenage girls adopt all sorts of outlandish positions before spanking them.

The principal in question, a Mr. Mihura, had been questioned about the use of corporal punishment at his school, and one of the questions he was asked during the course of the interview, was what position his staff made female pupils assume before paddling them. Thinking this to be a stupid question he said:

"I've considered several positions and rather lean toward stringing students up by their ankles, but since simply having them stand on their heads has such merit, we are still somewhat flexible on the matter."

Half a second's thought would, one would expect, have led most people to suspect that he was joking. For one thing, it would be a near-impossibility to paddle a teenager who is standing on her

head: the first touch of the paddle would upset her balance and send her crashing to the ground.

If further confirmation were needed, the most basic research would reveal the fact that no pupil at the school had ever reported being made to assume any position other than the traditional bending-over one.

However, Principal Mihura's statement was taken literally by the abolitionist societies and led to banner headlines on the front pages of their journals. It even found its way, eventually, into *Corporal Punishment in American Education*..

The rest of this chapter is devoted to a selection of cases in which the reality of what happened is somewhat less black-and-white than some reports would have had it.

### ***Three girls told to raise their skirts for eight-stroke canings***

In 1984 the *Sunday Times* published an article by Peter Wilby condemning the use of corporal punishment in schools. In the article, Mr. Wilby quoted a case in which three girls, aged eleven and twelve and studying at an independent school in the South East of England, were made to raise their skirts for eight strokes of the cane each.

The source of much of Mr. Wilby's material was the S.T.O.P.P. publication *Catalogue of Cruelty*, which printed the complaint of the father of one of the twelve-year-olds girls:

"My daughter and two other girls (one aged twelve, the other eleven) had been stealing money from other girls. Altogether they'd stolen about £12. The headmistress gave them each eight strokes of the cane on the buttocks. Their skirts were raised for the beating."

If this were all, then Mr. Wilby might have been more justified in his use of this incident to make his case; but the article then continued:

*"The parents of the other girls felt the punishment was justified, and were annoyed when I complained. I was told that the girls had been offered the choice of expulsion or caning and all had chosen the latter."*

This puts the incident in a far less unequivocal light. The girls, including the daughter of the father who complained, had *chosen* to

be caned in preference to a non-corporal punishment. Furthermore, the canings were felt to be deserved and appropriate by all concerned—all, that is, except for the one man who complained.

### ***Caned schoolgirl awarded £1,200***

In a milestone case in the campaign against British corporal punishment, fourteen-year-old ‘Miss X’ was awarded compensation after her mother, funded by S.T.O.P.P., complained to the European Court of Human Rights. Miss X had been given a caning from her headmistress that left her in ‘discomfort’ for several days with twelve-inch weals across her buttocks and with bruising to one of her hands (presumably where she had attempted to protect her bottom). The Court saw this as a clear case of ‘inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’ contrary to Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and awarded her compensation of £1,200 and £1,000 in legal costs. This case gave real momentum to the legal challenge to corporal punishment which led to the British Government’s reluctant decision, under the threat of a flood of similar cases, to abolish it in State schools.

The view in ‘Europe’, supported by British abolitionists was of a brutal and barbaric school meting out cruel punishments.

And yet there was another side to this case. A letter to the *Times Educational Supplement* written by Jane Hyde, a former pupil at the girls’ grammar school concerned, paints a very different picture of the régime there:

“At that school, the cane was used only after the most careful prior consultation with a girl’s parents, and then only by the head herself. I am certainly aware that alternative sanctions were applied when clear parental objections were voiced to corporal punishment. During my seven years *in statu pupillari* there was one occasion when, through misunderstanding, an outrageously naughty girl was caned whose parents had objected to corporal punishment...

Our unfortunate headmistress was thereupon (at the instigation and expense of an outside pressure group) actually taken to court.”

The rest, as they say, is history.

### ***'Excessive' caning on fourteen-year-old girl's hands?***

In *R. v. Gilchrist*, a case decided in the Liverpool crime court, a schoolmaster successfully appealed to Quarter Sessions against a conviction for assault on a fourteen-year-old girl, for which he had been fined five pounds.

The case for the girl, widely reported in the press, was that he had excessively punished her by caning her on the hands between fourteen and sixteen times, and that she still bore the marks four weeks later.

However, the girl's lawyers were, on cross-examining, unable to produce any evidence to support the claimed number of strokes, and the appeal court concluded that the actual number had been no more than three times on each hand.

In weighing up the evidence both of the court and of an investigation by the Ministry of Education, the judge stated that it was clear that the schoolmaster was doing good work at the school and that he had given a great deal of thought to his conduct and teaching. Furthermore, he said that it was plain that the girl had deliberately maintained a dumb insolence both before and during her caning, which could have ruined school discipline and ruined a lot of the headmaster's good work. Parents, he said, should allow discipline in school to be maintained.

### ***Town divided over paddling complaint***

On the 19th of September 1991 two teenage schoolgirls from the southern town of Dewar were sent to the office of principal Jim Herring and paddled for fighting in class. One of the girls was given three 'swats'; the other, the daughter of James and Carol Durbin, was given one swat before being made to remove the lycra cycling shorts she was wearing under her sweat-pants, and then given a further three.

Mr. Durbin protested to the principal, to the area school superintendent and to the local press, claiming that his daughter had not been fighting but playing, that she had never been in trouble before, and that she had been 'beat [*sic*] black and blue'. He called for the resignation of Mr. Herring.

"I told Mr. Atkins (Dewar School superintendent)" he said, "that

if he couldn't put a stop to what was going on with Jim Herring, I would. We want him fired from the school system."

"He said the first swat didn't count because she was wearing biking pants under her sweatpants," said Carol Durbin, "What some two-hundred-and-some-odd pound man has to make a ninety pound girl remove something like that to spank her—it just makes me sick to think about it."

It was this side of the story—and particularly the removal of the cycling shorts—that was picked up by the national abolitionist groups.

Whilst the removal of clothing for punishment—even though the principal left the room—was extremely unprofessional and unnecessary, after the initial flurry of publicity from Mr. and Mrs. Durbin, local opinion subsequently rallied behind the principal, as it began to emerge that the incident was not as clear-cut as it seemed. School records published in a local newspaper showed that this was the girl who had been reprimanded—but not spanked—for the exactly same offence five times previously, and a pupil at the school testified that she had been bullied remorselessly by her.

# *The Problem with Abolition*

In the few years since the cane was abolished in Britain's schools four things have happened. The reported levels of violent and disruptive behaviour have risen steeply. Levels of 'persistent low-level misbehaviour' have increased even more dramatically. The number of pupils expelled has doubled and then doubled again; and the number of cases of staff simply refusing to teach the most difficult pupils has increased threefold.

With these changes has come a disillusionment with the 'positive discipline' theories of the 'sixties and the 'seventies, and a growing realisation that punishments as well as rewards are needed. However, teachers are increasingly frustrated with the limited and ineffective sanctions available to them.

## ***Violent and disruptive misbehaviour***

In 1993 the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities commissioned a study of the problems facing inner-city schools. The report was published a year later and, in stark contrast to the Association's former liberal and 'progressive' stance on educational matters, insisted that things had reached a crisis point: that school discipline had degenerated to unacceptable levels and that some teachers simply 'could not cope' unless they were given more support in dealing with disruptive pupils.

The document's authors cited evidence of primary schools in the East London borough of Newham having to abolish general play-times to avoid fighting between pupils; of a school in the East Riding of Yorkshire that expelled a four-year-old for aggressiveness toward other children; and of a six-year-old in Manchester regarded by his school as 'out of control' after he continually refused to work, turned over chairs and attacked other pupils.

Mrs. Kath Fry, working party chairman, said: "We are not talking about children being naughty. We are talking about children being violent, aggressive and uncontrollable. We expect teachers somehow to cope with this."

### ***'Persistent low-level misbehaviour'***

The Scottish Council for Research in Education published a report in 1992 which acknowledged the problem of extreme or violent misbehaviour in schools but which pointed to the dramatic and all-pervading increase in constant minor disobedience as being potentially even more serious.

"What really wears teachers down," said Professor Pamela Munn, one of the report's authors, "is the 'drip-drip effect' of small misdemeanours. It's the regular talking out of turn, eating in class, hindering other pupils. They are all things that seem trivial out of context but when they happen day in and day out they really get up people's noses [*sic*]."

As this type of misbehaviour has increased, so many parents are less willing, or less able, to do anything to help. At one time the threat of a letter home to parents, or of a telephone call, used to be enough of a sanction in itself. Now, all too often, the immediate result is that the parent arrives on the school doorstep threatening to beat up the head or the teacher.

"All types of authority are challenged these days," says Gareth James, senior assistant secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers. "The public are saying, 'I have got rights,' rather than 'I have got responsibilities'."

The result is that more and more teachers are leaving the profession. Those who remain are increasingly prone to stress and depression and, as a consequence, they have lower levels of commitment and enthusiasm for their jobs. This in turn means that their pupils' education suffers.

### ***Expulsions and suspensions***

In Leicester's secondary schools there were seventy-four expulsions of difficult or uncontrollable pupils in the last year that the cane was used. Four years later there were over two hundred. One school, Manor High School, expelled only four children in the twenty-four years before abolition. It now expels that many every year.

The picture is the same in the rest of the country. In caning's last year, Britain's schools expelled just under three thousand pupils. In the 1993-94 school year, almost eight thousand pupils were

expelled, and by the following year the number had grown to ten thousand and rising.

In addition to full expulsions, Government figures indicate that as many as ninety thousand pupils are now suspended each year for fixed periods.

### ***Refusal to teach difficult pupils***

Lacking what they see as effective disciplinary sanctions, teachers are increasingly refusing to teach the most difficult pupils.

In 1992, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers recorded eleven disputes where pupils were so disruptive that teachers refused to teach them, despite being ordered to do so by the Head and the Local Education Authority. In 1993, the union recorded seventeen; and in the first ten months of 1994 it recorded twenty-six.

In Birmingham in 1993, a primary school was closed for a two-day 'cooling-off' period when staff refused to re-admit a pupil who had assaulted a teacher. The boy was moved to nearby Sandwell, whence he was again expelled after 'having a go' at a dinner-lady.

Eamonn O'Kane, deputy general secretary of N.A.S./U.W.T. argues that these cases are just the tip of an iceberg. "The trouble is there seem to be more of them," he says. "Sometimes kids are just violent, assaulting teachers, and sometimes it's other pupils. At other times they are just utterly disruptive, taking up an enormous amount of time and energy. There comes a point when everybody has just had enough."

### ***The failure of positive discipline***

The theory of 'positive discipline' first began to make its mark on British education in the 1960s and reached its peak in the early 1990s. The idea was that bad behaviour was related to low self-esteem, and that if children were given encouragement and praise they would not break the rules.

The theory seemed sound enough at the time, but when it began to be put into practice it just didn't seem to work, and behaviour in Britain's schools got worse rather than better. At first this was assumed to be because the system was in transition and that an



## **Industrial action by N.A.S./U.W.T. in 1994**

### **January**

BIRMINGHAM. Strike action after governors insist that staff continue teaching a disruptive child.

MANCHESTER. Refusal to teach six-year-old who assaulted teacher.

OUTER LONDON. Ban on three pupils who assaulted teachers.

### **February**

LIVERPOOL. Refusal to teach pupil who assaulted teacher with milk bottle.

LANCASHIRE. Ban on eight-year old who constantly abused teachers.

HUDDERSFIELD. Ban on child after he and his father assaulted teacher.

### **March**

INNER LONDON. Ban on child who threatened to kill a teacher.

HUDDERSFIELD. Ban on nine-year-old after governors insisted he came back to school after an assault.

### **April**

BERKSHIRE. Ban on a boy governors wanted to reinstate after an assault.

WORCESTERSHIRE. Ban on boy who constantly shouted abuse.

GATESHEAD. Ban on teaching three pupils who set fire to the school.

SHEFFIELD. Refusal to teach three pupils who wrote obscene graffiti on the school walls.

### **May**

NORTHERN IRELAND. Refusal to teach pupil guilty of assault.

DERBYSHIRE. Refusal to admit seven-year-old boy with violent history to school.

## **June**

**NORTHERN IRELAND.** Refusal to teach boys guilty of persistent sexual harassment.

**WOLVERHAMPTON.** Ban on child after family members assaulted teacher.

**BIRMINGHAM.** Ban on violent child transferred back to school after another education authority rejected him.

## **July**

**LIVERPOOL.** Ban on violent child reinstated after parents appealed to education authority.

**BIRMINGHAM.** Refusal to teach child found guilty of assault.

## **September**

**KIRKLEES.** Refusal to teach two pupils who had threatened each other with knives.

**NORTH WALES.** Ban on persistently disruptive and violent pupil.

## **October**

**NORTH WALES.** Refusal to teach child after governors overruled head's decision to exclude pupil who made malicious allegations about a teacher.

**BIRMINGHAM.** Ban on teaching child readmitted to school by governors after being expelled for violent behaviour.

## **November**

**SHEFFIELD.** Action after head failed to respond to assault on teacher by a pupil.

**CUMBERLAND.** Ban on child governors wanted to reinstate after assault on a teacher.

**DURHAM.** Refusal to teach child after governors refused to back head in excluding child guilty of assault.

## **December**

**WARWICKSHIRE.** Ban on disturbed child allowed to return after assaulting a teacher.

**NORTHUMBERLAND.** Refusal to teach child making malicious allegations against staff.

**LANCASHIRE.** Refusal to teach pupil guilty of assault.

**YORKSHIRE.** Strike call over decision to re-admit pupil suspended three times for violent behaviour in the class.

older generation of traditional teachers were still in place. Hopes were pinned on the future and on the new generation of younger progressive teachers.

There was a growing realisation that something wasn't quite right with the theory, but for many years it wasn't acceptable to mention the fact in educational debate: it marked one out as a 'reactionary'. The first 'official' recognition of the problems of 'positive discipline' by the educational establishment came in 1989, when a government committee under Lord Elton, recognised the problem of persistent low-level misbehaviour under 'positive discipline' and recommended "whole-school" policies on discipline which should include a range of sanctions as well as rewards.

Since then, according to Dr. Eric Perkins, a Nottingham University psychologist who runs courses on classroom management for teachers, schools have accepted that they must employ negative as well as positive discipline; which is to say they must *punish* as well as reward. The problem is that they have looked in vain for solutions which are both acceptable to current educational orthodoxy and effective.

Dr. Perkins has come to what many people will find an extraordinary or even unspeakable conclusion, and it concerns the use of corporal punishment. Now, Dr. Perkins believes, it may start to gain new credence amongst teachers.

His case is that the existence of corporal punishment used to curb both extreme misbehaviour and, importantly, much of the low-level misbehaviour which is such a problem nowadays. While the cane was usually only used for serious offences, its presence may have had a beneficial effect on pupils' behaviour in general.

Dr. Perkins' conclusions are echoed by David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers. Mr. Hart believes there is a growing feeling of frustration at the lack of sanctions currently available, especially now that parents can block a detention and indefinite exclusions are no longer allowed. The result, he thinks, will almost certainly be an even greater flood of permanent exclusions and more talk about corporal punishment. "Heads", he said in an interview in *The Independent on Sunday*, "are beginning to wonder whether there is a case for corporal punishment."

# *The Return of Corporal Punishment*

## *Early moves in the reintroduction of corporal punishment*

IN THE late 'seventies and early 'eighties, the influence of the 'positive discipline' or 'all punishment is wrong' approach to education was reaching its peak, and corporal punishment in the West seemed to be entering its terminal decline. In the U.S.A., most of the Northern States that had not already abandoned the use of the paddle began to do so; and in the South many of the more 'progressive' urban school districts began to do the same. Across the Atlantic, the European Court of Human Rights was beginning to make its presence, and its disapproval of caning, known to the British Government.

It was also, paradoxically, at this time that the first real signs of a 'traditionalist' reaction began to be seen. In the same period of time that education had become more liberal, crime rates had begun to rise dramatically and, more importantly, to broaden their spread, so that the robberies and murders that had once seemed to be the sole property of inner cities and television crime shows, became increasingly commonplace in the suburbs and even in the countryside.

And if the streets and parks were thought to be unsafe, the schools were no less so. It was more than a general worsening of behaviour and an increase in childish 'naughtiness': in Miami, in Los Angeles, in Washington and in other parts of the U.S.A. the problems were less with chalk-throwing and tacks on chairs than with guns, crack dealing and gang vendettas. It was from these areas that the clamour for a restoration of firm discipline began, but it was soon to spread across the nation.

This led to a new get-tough movement. In response to adult crime the U.S.A. in the late 'seventies saw, with the execution of murderer Gary Gilmour, the return of the death penalty; the 'eighties saw the construction of a new generation of super-tough, high isolation prisons where criminals were to be sent to spend the

remainder of their lives without hope of parole. By the 'nineties televisions and other privileges were removed from many prisons, and inmates were to be made to work on the newly-reintroduced chain gangs.

In response to what was seen as the crisis in school discipline in America, the recently-abandoned paddle began to find its way back into schools, starting in the more run-down and crime-ridden areas but soon spreading outwards.

In the Miami district of Dade County, Florida, corporal punishment had gone into steep decline by the mid-'seventies. In 1978, for example, three teachers were reprimanded by their superiors for striking pupils.

In 1979 the decline halted; in 1980 the number of paddlings increased for the first time in years; in 1981 there was a further increase and in 1982 the number of reported paddlings jumped by twenty-seven percent, according to figures compiled by school officials, with sixteen and three-quarter thousand spankings reported by principals.

### ***Paddlings at Lake Stevens Junior High***

Nowhere was this new enthusiasm for the paddle more evident than at Lake Stevens Junior High, where in 1981, Principal James Hunt used his paddle (nicknamed 'Mr. Understanding', according to a report by Florida's Cox News Service) to hand out eight hundred and seventy-four paddlings. That came to five paddlings a day, a record for any one school in the county system. About two hundred and twenty of the paddlings were given to girls.

One of the more surprising aspects of the school was that the high number of paddlings was a reflection of parental and pupil choice.

As a matter of policy, corporal punishment was never used at Lake Stevens for a first offence. When a pupil *was* reported a second or third time for the same disciplinary problem—such as truancy, fighting or coming to class late—the parents would first be contacted and allowed a day to discuss with their child the alternatives of her either taking a paddling or a temporary suspension from school, lasting from one to ten days. Given the choice, the parents almost always opted for the paddle.

In Hunt's opinion, the reasons for this are that spankings scare pupils and force them to reconsider their actions; but more importantly from a parent's point of view, they are over in a few minutes and, unlike suspensions, don't put pupils behind in their class work.

Once a paddling was decided on, the pupil would be sent to Mr. Hunt's office, where one of the first things he or she would see would be 'Mr. Understanding' in its usual place, on full display on the desktop ("It takes all the anxiety out of their visits" he told reporters.) Another teacher was called in to witness as the child was lectured on the misdemeanour and then directed towards a vinyl chair.

What followed next was described by thirteen-year-old Sonny Stratton, who was paddled for fighting with another girl in her class:

"You have to bend over the back of an armchair and rest your hands on the seat, and then you get paddled. I got two licks." Asked to elaborate on what it was like, she added, "It hurts."

Occasionally children would swear and yell abuse whilst being paddled. Teachers in Britain might take such behaviour as a sign of further defiance, but Florida principals like Mr. Hunt seem to see it rather as testimony to the punishment's effectiveness:

"It's okay if they turn around and call me a four-letter word," said Hunt, "I'd probably do the same. I want to see some kind of reaction. When I don't, I worry that it's in vain."

### ***Corporal punishment in Britain after abolition***

Once corporal punishment was abolished in State schools in mainland Britain, a high proportion of the independent sector followed suit. By 1990 only a handful of the most convinced pro-caning schools continued to use it; and of these only a tiny minority continued to cane girls.

In the meantime, however, a feeling of dissatisfaction amongst parents—particularly those with strong religious beliefs—led to the formation of a new generation of small private schools, in which traditional discipline, including the corporal punishment of both boys and girls as a last resort, was central. These schools have since grown and proliferated at an astounding rate.

### ***'Traditional values': Rodney School, Nottinghamshire***

Rodney School is a £4,000-a-year co-educational boarding school near Newark, Nottinghamshire. A high proportion of the school's pupils are drawn from armed services families. Around thirty canings a year are administered, either by the headmaster, Dr. Christopher Reynolds, or by Miss Joan Thomas, the proprietress and founder of the school. Speaking to the *London Evening Standard* in February 1991, Miss Thomas said:

"I cane the girls and Dr. Reynolds canes the boys. We usually give two strokes on the hand. We think it's right to treat the sexes alike."

Occasionally, and for more serious offences, pupils are caned on the bottom. When a punishment is merited, pupils—or their parents—are usually allowed to choose between caning and a non-corporal punishment such as suspension. In this area, Rodney School is perhaps closer to the newer generation of American-influenced schools than to the older British model in which the Head's decision was absolute and there was no choice in the matter.

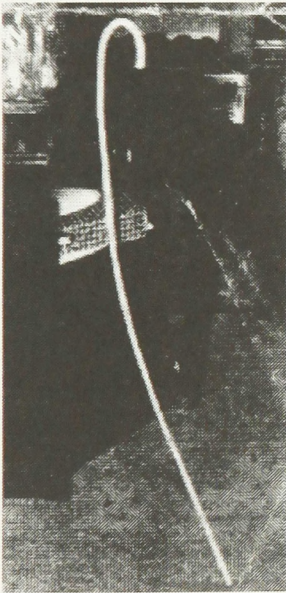
One recent caning case at the school was reported in the national press. In March 1992, five eleven-year-old girls were caught in the boys' dormitory at night. Their parents were contacted and given the choice of allowing their daughters to be expelled or caned. All of the parents opted for caning, and so on the day after the incident, the girls were sent to Miss Thomas's office to receive their punishments. The girls were caned both on their hands and their bottoms. The ringleader, who was given the most severe punishment, was given seven strokes on her hands and five on her bottom.

Some time after the canings, an anonymous complaint about the incident was forwarded to the social services department. Social services inspectors then visited the school and interviewed those involved, but since the school was acting within the law no further action was taken. However, a social worker leaked the story to E.P.O.C.H., the anti-corporal punishment society, who then contacted the press. Interviewed by *The Independent* in June 1992, Dr. Reynolds described the complaint as 'a piece of mischief'. "None of the children or parents of the children involved were in any way associated with contacting the social services department. The school had the parents' support for what happened."





*The proprietress of Rodney School, Miss Joan Thomas, with four girls whom she has caned: from left to right, Kathryn Lacey, Adele Kirkman, Nicola Whiteley and Joanne Gilmore.*



*Adele Kirkman said, "I had the choice of being gated for three weekends and writing an essay or getting the cane. I just decided the cane would be quicker." She received three strokes on the hand and commented, "If you have done something wrong you should be punished for it."*

*Nicola Whiteley, who received six strokes, said, "I had to agree I had been in the wrong."*

***The Rodney School cane*** Photographed in the Head's study.



Dr. Reynolds complained to Mrs. Patricia Thomas, the Local Government Ombudsman, who investigated the conduct of the social services and published her findings in January 1995. She found that Nottinghamshire County Council, which employed the social worker who leaked the story, was guilty of maladministration and had failed to maintain proper confidentiality of information. However, she was not persuaded that the school had suffered as a result of the publicity: if anything it had attracted more interest from parents keen on a traditional education for their children; and so she did not award compensation.

### ***The new generation: King's Park School, Lancashire***

King's Park School, which opened in the town of Leigh in Lancashire in 1992, is a very different kind of school. Although Rodney School is, in years, quite a young school, it defiantly upholds very traditional and very British school values in an age that has largely rejected them. King's Park, on the other hand, takes its philosophy and teaching methods from the Christian Education society, one of the growing number of American-based religious teaching organisations that are expanding their operations around the world.

In a nutshell, these organisations' methods involve a Christian slant to learning, an emphasis on order and discipline, and an acceptance of corporal punishment (or 'corporal correction' as they prefer to call it) as a last resort.

King's Park School is a £1,000 a-year day-school, the 45th Christian Education school to be opened in Britain in recent years. It is currently based in the buildings of the Pentecostal Bride Community Church—although there are plans to buy the buildings of a former Church of England school—and educates boys and girls up to the age of sixteen. Corporal punishment is the punishment of last resort for both boys and girls at the school, and is administered to the bottoms of unruly pupils by a teacher of their own sex with an American-style flat wooden paddle. The maximum punishment is five strokes.

There are six full-time and eight part-time teachers, all of whom are trained by the Swindon-based U.K. office of Christian

Education and are paid considerably less than state teachers. Nick Park, one of the Bride Church's two pastors, described the teaching methods in an interview with *The Independent on Sunday* in September 1992: "Children learn at their own pace," he said, "one basic concept at a time, studying at their own work-station. The curriculum covers all the major subjects.

"We do not teach religion as a separate subject. The whole curriculum is approached from a Christian perspective."

The mathematics programme, for example, intersperses multiplication tables with quotations from Corinthians which the child must complete in a way that counts the letters and spaces between the words.

The corporal 'correction', according to Mr. Park, is used only as a last resort. Any boy or girl who is spanked is accompanied by a member of staff who will pray with him or her during the punishment.

Parents, he said, are attracted to schools like King's Park precisely because of the strict discipline, which contrasts sharply with the semi-anarchy of so many modern state schools and which provides a secure environment in which children may learn.

"Some of our children were in schools where bullying, drug abuse and theft were rife," he said. "There is disillusionment with academic standards."

"Most of our children attend this church. They want a curriculum based on a spiritual, Christian perspective. It is not right-wing, but it does have a biblical, evangelical interpretation. We have Catholic children at the school. Their parents might not agree with us on religious issues, but they prefer our teaching and the ethic of our curriculum to the Roman Catholic school from which they have removed their children."

King's Park, which cost the Bride Church £10,000 to set up, is subject to inspection by Whitehall. Arthur Roderick, of Christian Education, said that over half a million families world-wide educate their children using his society's methods; and that in Britain, besides the rapidly expanding number of independent religious schools in the past few years, another 150 families were using the system to teach their children at home. In the same period that

King's Park was opened, similar schools were started in east London, Thetford and Launceston, and proposals had been submitted for schools in Edinburgh and Northern Ireland.

"It appeals to non-conformist Protestant groups, both charismatic and non-charismatic," May Roderick said. "Our results in terms of academic standards and the character of children have left us much encouraged. Parents are encouraged by a system that is getting back to basics and giving their children a foundation in understanding the mechanics of language before they start to use it.

"The Christian ethos in the curriculum is non-denominational, but the widest use of it has been by Baptists, Brethren, Assemblies of God and Elim churches."

The British course has already been adjusted from its American original to fit the history, geography and mathematics syllabuses into British idioms.

### ***New support for corporal punishment***

In 1994, in response to a challenge by anti-punishment organisations, the right of private schools to administer corporal punishment was upheld by both the House of Lords and the European Court.

In the same year, a High Court judge condemned Sutton Borough Council for striking a childminder from its register after she refused to sign an undertaking not to smack, and ordered her to be reinstated. The mother of the children concerned, a committed Christian, had argued that the childminder, who shared her faith, was acting on her express instructions when disciplining her children.

The judge, Mr. Justice Wilson, said the council was wrong, and their policy "went beyond the discharge of their legal duty".

Prompted by the judge's verdict, Government ministers angered pressure groups by speaking out in his favour. More than this, they made formal the ruling that childminders may, as a matter of principle, smack children in their care if parents agree. New guidelines on the registration of childminders were then issued to local authorities, forcing many of them to overturn long-standing bans on the use of physical punishment.

To rub salt into the abolitionists' wounds, the Health Secretary

Mrs Virginia Bottomley announced publicly that she had smacked her own children and saw nothing at all wrong in it; whilst John Bowis, the Junior Health Minister said:

“To bring up children properly you need to teach them right from wrong. Punishment for the latter and praise for the former are part of a good family setting.”

Predictably, the tabloid press praised this support for smacking as A Victory For Common Sense, and quoted various assorted celebrities and members of the public as saying that they were smacked as children and it hadn't done *them* any harm, and what the young people of today need is..... and so on.

Every other minor celebrity, it seemed, wanted to be in on the act: thus, television announcer Philip Schofield told newspapers how:

“I haven't been beaten myself but I'm absolutely in favour of corporal punishment. The system has tried every way of dealing with people and I am firmly convinced that this is the only alternative.”

Perhaps more surprising and unexpected than this was the amount of support for corporal punishment amongst schoolchildren themselves. In 1994, for example, the British television station Channel 4 screened an hour-long televised debate on the subject, by the name of *People's Parliament*, in which a hundred children and teenagers listened to the cases for and against the use of physical discipline and were given the opportunity to cross-examine leading figures on either side of the debate. Ten or twenty years before, when corporal punishment was an everyday fact of school life, ninety-nine out of a hundred children could have been safely counted on to vote for its abolition, given half the chance. As it was, in the vote at the end of the programme, a clear majority supported the *retention* of the cane in private schools; and a motion in favour of restoring corporal punishment in state schools was only narrowly defeated.

In 1996 an influential group of Christian educationalists, led by Mr John Burn, head of the Christian Institute, called for corporal punishment, abolished in schools ten years earlier, to be reinstated without delay. A pamphlet issued by the group, entitled *Education at*

*the Crossroads*, advocated a “fair, judicial and properly regulated system of corporal punishment which is open to regular inspection and is akin to that of a loving parent who sometimes needs to physically check a wayward child.” It adds: “Increasingly, with the demise of properly regulated corporal punishment . . . teachers have had to tolerate unacceptable levels of violent disruption, defiance, ill-discipline, vulgarity and threat.”

Commenting on the effects of the loss of discipline, Mr. Burns said: “The moral fabric of society is in tatters because we think, plan and legislate as if there were no moral absolutes. Those of us who work at the sharp end encounter daily the consequences of the collapse of moral values as it manifests itself in our schools.”

*The Daily Telegraph*, Britain’s largest-circulation ‘serious’ national newspaper supported the Christian Institute’s proposals in an unequivocal editorial.

“The Government should repeal the abolition of corporal punishment in State schools,” said the *Telegraph*. “Corporal punishment, properly applied, would have nothing to do with cruelty: the threat of it alone would help to deter bullies, minimise classroom disruption and restore some of the lost authority of the teaching profession.” It would “protect rather than infringe children’s rights, by helping to reverse the rising incidence of bullying, thus enabling the majority to receive the education that is their due.”

On the question of ‘European’ quasi-legal interference such as that which prompted abolition in the first instance, the *Telegraph* leader comments: “There would doubtless be challenges in the European Court . . . but this newspaper has argued repeatedly for Britain to end the right of individual subjects to take cases to Strasbourg; this country is a liberal democracy of long standing and its human rights record does not need supervision from abroad.”

### ***The return of corporal punishment in the home***

*“In modern times, Dr. Spock’s despotic benevolence has held such sway that it has become a ghastly guilt trip.”*

Christina Hardyment, authoress of *Perfect Parents*

*Daily Telegraph*, June 1995

Despite the efforts of E.P.O.C.H., and despite twenty years or more in which the theories of 'progressive' childcare writers have become the orthodox view, the vast majority of Western parents still believe that physical punishment has a role in the upbringing of children. A survey taken in 1995 showed that no less than 97% of mothers use corporal punishment on their children when necessary.

Furthermore, where before they were condemned or patronised by the 'experts' for their behaviour, they are now beginning to receive their explicit support. Even leaving aside Dr. Spock's public recantation of some of the excesses of his earlier theories, which could be taken as the action of one rapidly becoming a grumpy old man, many of the newer, younger theorists are beginning to stand up for smacking:

*"A sound smack in a loving family is unlikely to leave scars, whereas cutting sarcasm from a parent who is cold and undemonstrative can be more cruel than anything physical.... Perhaps I had better 'come out' myself. By the standards of E.P.O.C.H., the campaign to end all corporal punishment of children, I am in the abusive class... The vast majority of parents are well intentioned, and any attempt to assert that the ninety-seven percent (who smack their children) are wrong in the way they are behaving strikes me as over-assertive and unrealistic."*

Christina Hardyment

According to Australian childcare expert Christopher Green, corporal punishment "...cannot be all that damaging to children. If it were, then our ancestors... must have been a pretty disturbed lot."

When it comes to the crunch, "You can debate all day with a defiant child. You can explain all about the finer points of love, character-building and even your evangelical views against corporal punishment. But the chances are that the words may miss the mark, while the gentle gesture of a smack may land bulls-eye on the target."

All of these views, and the many more like them that are increasingly heard from childcare experts today, would have been absolute heresy even as little as five or ten years ago.

## *A Future for Corporal Punishment?*

THERE are, broadly speaking, two ways to look at corporal punishment: either you agree with it, or you do not; and, broadly speaking, there are two kinds of reasons for either agreeing or disagreeing with it, the ideological reasons and the pragmatic ones.

The purest anti-punishment idealists, the strict vegans of the education world, tend to be opposed to the whole idea of punishment, corporal or otherwise. The purest *pro*-punishment idealists, on the other hand, tend to think that children *ought* to be punished, and preferably spanked. They think this either simply because they believe that it is ‘good for their character’ or because the Bible says so: “We are going to raise,” as the elder of the North East Kingdom Community Church is quoted elsewhere in this book as saying, “a lost generation unless they are properly spanked.”

Those with a pragmatic view on the subject of punishment tend to use whichever methods seem to produce the best results, without agonising too deeply over first principles. The result of this has been, historically, that certain types of schools in certain types of areas have used the cane, the strap or the paddle to deal with more serious misbehaviour, while other types of schools in different areas with more amenable pupils and fewer behaviour problems have found that they have seldom or never needed to use them.

Today’s educational establishment hovers somewhere in the middle of all this, in a kind of halfway house somewhere between a pragmatic acceptance that punishment *works*, whatever the theories of the ’sixties and ’seventies said; and an outright ideological rejection of the idea of *corporal* punishment. The question to be asked is whether there are good reasons for this, or whether it is a matter of simple squeamishness over punishments that look too much like, well, *punishments*.

At the end of a discussion of all these things, this book comes up with a few suggestions of its own for a sensible and effective system of discipline for the future.

## *The idealists*

This non-punishment 'positive discipline' approach which worked its way into the educational mainstream from the 'sixties onwards, was first—and in its purest form—used in small, independent 'progressive' schools like Summerhill.

Summerhill was founded in 1927 by the Scottish educationalist A.S. Neill, and was intended to remove *all* aspects of authoritarianism from education. Pupils could set their own standards of dress and behaviour and attend as few or as many lessons as they wanted to. Within lessons, they could steer the development of their studies in any way that interested and motivated them. State schools seldom went that far, but they did widely adopt the principle of non-punitive 'positive discipline'.

Many of the children came from wealthy families (and particularly wealthy American families) and had, or developed in their time at Summerhill, what are euphemistically known as 'behaviour problems'. Because of this, an increasing part of the curriculum came to be taken up with counselling and psychotherapy. This, however, made the school even more attractive to parents who themselves were great believers in the power of this kind of therapy.

It has been argued elsewhere in this book that the evidence has proved quite overwhelmingly that this approach does not work in any sense that the average person would recognise, at least on a large scale and given the fact that society is as it is. It has been argued that behaviour became unmanageable, that the standard of education plummeted, and that just about every measurable or observable criterion of educational success took a nose-dive when state schools started adopting these techniques.

The kindest way to put it is to say, as today's textbooks have it, that Summerhill was an interesting footnote in the development of modern education, more influential in the principles it propounded than successful in the sense of producing measurable results.

To a true idealist, though, the kind of argument that is based on 'standards' and 'results' misses the entire point.

The point, they argue, is not to produce identical rows of silently obedient pupils who know how to do well in exams, but to nour-



ish the whole person; and if that means that they become a 'failure' by society's standards, then that, they will say, is a price worth paying. Furthermore, they would argue that their pupils' common failure to do well at exams or to get good jobs is largely the fault of an aggressively competitive society that rewards the wrong kind of achievement. In a just and fair society, such as the one they see themselves as setting out to create, their pupils would be widely recognised as the successes they know themselves to be.

Thousands of middle-class parents paid—and continue to pay—thousands of pounds a year to send their children to schools like Summerhill, despite the lurid press headlines of drug scandals and sex scandals and despite the poor exam results; and this book, perhaps surprisingly, takes no issue with them at all.

Both Britain and the U.S.A. have a long history of tolerance for eccentricity. If these people choose to take a different view of educational success; if they know what they are enrolling their children for and know that it is unlikely to help them to 'get on' by the general standards of society; and if they are willing to pay for it, then there is no good reason why they should not be allowed to do so.

There is a problem, however, where these methods are applied to the state schools that unsuspecting parents send their children to in the hope and expectation of conventional things like good discipline, high quality teaching and good exam results. This is quite another matter.

Much of what has been said about the anti-punishment idealists can be applied equally well to the other end of the spectrum. Like the Summerhill idealists, the Fundamentalists and traditionalists base their view of corporal punishment not so much on whether it is a useful or effective thing to do in certain circumstances, but on a deeply-held personal belief system.

As for Summerhill, this book would argue that there is a place for schools where spanking is used to enforce the link between calculus and Corinthians, or geography and Genesis, if that is what parents want; but it certainly *isn't* in the State educational mainstream.

### ***The modern compromise***

All punishments, whether corporal or otherwise, cause suffering:

that is what punishment *is* and what it's there for. If it doesn't cause a culprit to suffer, then it isn't a punishment. It's as simple as that.

The current view of punishment is that it is acceptable to cause certain kinds of suffering to naughty schoolchildren but not others. Today's 'acceptable' everyday punishments include detention, lines, writing to parents, isolation and loss of privileges. As a last resort, pupils are suspended or expelled. These punishments are all felt to be in some way better or more modern than corporal punishment. It is worth asking why.

### ***Are non-corporal punishments kinder?***

The first thing one needs to be clear on is why one wants to be kinder in the first place, if the aim of punishment is to cause a sufficient degree of suffering to deter the child from committing the same offence again. The most sensible answer would be that there is a point at which a punishment can be said to cause just enough suffering to act as an effective deterrent, and that to go too far across this line is to be unnecessarily cruel. It might be argued that non-corporal punishments are reasonably close to this point whilst corporal punishments go far beyond it, causing too much suffering for the offence.

When you look at real punishments, though, it isn't nearly as clear-cut as that. It all depends on what actually happens in any particular instance: a year's worth of detentions, for example, is infinitely crueller than one stroke of the slipper. Both corporal and non-corporal punishments, in the wrong hands, can be either too feeble and ineffective to deter, or unnecessarily cruel and severe.

All that can be said with any certainty is that both kinds of punishment cause suffering, but that the kinds of suffering they cause are different. Non-corporal punishments are mainly designed to cause *mental* suffering: frustration, embarrassment, inconvenience, boredom and so on. The 'last resorts' of suspension and expulsion cause most of these and one or two other effects which are discussed in the next section.

The main feature of the suffering caused by non-corporal punishment is that it is *protracted*: no one moment of it will generally match the brief and painful intensity of a caning, but it is not nearly so quickly over and done with.

To return to the original question: which is *kinder*?

It is impossible to make a hard-and-fast rule, since so much depends on the individual circumstances. It is interesting to note, though, that although schoolchildren are generally afraid of corporal punishment, the cases in this book show that where they have a choice, they will often choose to be spanked rather than to be given a drawn-out non-corporal punishment.

### ***Is abuse of non-corporal punishment less harmful?***

All punishments are open to abuse. They can be used too readily, too thoughtlessly, too zealously, too severely and too vindictively. There is a point of view that holds that the consequences of the abuse of corporal punishment are by far the more serious.

In a small but unpleasant minority of cases corporal punishment has been seriously abused. Colin West, mentioned earlier in this book, flouted the law to administer some very strange and improper beatings to girls in his school. The fact that he had the opportunity to do this, and he should not have had, is something that this book will return to shortly.

But what of the use of the non-corporal last resorts of suspension and expulsion? The statistics show that in Britain, more and more of the 'difficult' children who would once have been caned, are now being simply refused an education, either through official expulsion or through an unofficial but union-backed exclusion from lessons.

Expulsion causes two kinds of suffering. In the short term it produces many of the same effects that the other non-corporal punishments cause. In the long term, there is added suffering that comes from a growing awareness of the lost opportunity of an education cut short and chances missed. At the very worst, there is the suffering caused by the knowledge of a failed life.

Since the abolition of corporal punishment in Britain's state schools, thousands of children who would have completed their education and gained whatever qualifications they were capable of, are written off by the system as ineducable.

It seems that the effects of the ill-considered or spiteful use of non-corporal punishment are as severe, as traumatic and as long-lasting as those of corporal punishment.

## ***So what's wrong with corporal punishment?***

If you accept the need to punish naughty schoolchildren, as most schools nowadays do, there really seems to be no good reason at all to refuse to countenance the use of corporal punishment. It is not, in itself, markedly crueller or more dangerous when abused than is non-corporal punishment.

What seems to be guiding modern sensibilities in this matter is not so much a distaste for suffering as for the *appearance* of suffering. Corporal punishment looks and sounds as if it hurts, whereas other punishments—which may actually cause more suffering and more long-term damage—do not. This is what makes them acceptable.

It is not reason, nor ideology, nor even pragmatism pure and simple, but a squeamish sentimentality that drives this way of thinking. The Victorian age, with its skirted table-legs, tried to pretend that sex didn't exist. Our age does the same for the other side of physical being: for pain and for suffering and for death. We try to wish them away and euphemise them away.

The new aversion to corporal punishment is as much a sign of the times as is the municipal crematorium or the supermarket meat counter, where death is sanitised and wrapped in plastic film so that it does not look like what it really is.

These things are signs not of 'progress' or of 'enlightenment' but of modern urban culture's unhealthy dislocation from the natural and physical world. It is a culture based on show and on pretence rather than on substance.

## ***A role for corporal punishment***

The argument of this book is that if we accept that we need to use punishment in schools, then we need to face up to what it is, exactly, that we do when we punish. We cause suffering, even though it may not *look* like it.

We need to accept that in some circumstances, a short, sharp physical pain is more effective and less harmful in the long-term than a drawn-out dose of mental anguish.

As long as we see some form of punishment to be necessary we cannot, and should not, exclude *corporal* punishment on the basis of a confused modern squeamishness.

We must, of course, ensure that it is fairly and appropriately applied, and that the opportunities for abuse which have arisen in the past are identified and ended.

### ***Stop Press: Talk of Reintroduction in Britain***

As this new edition of *The Corporal Punishment of Schoolgirls* goes to press, news has broken that Government education ministers in Britain are seriously discussing the reintroduction of caning for 'unteachable' pupils, in the light of the tide of expulsions and exclusions running at 12,000—a 500% increase in six years.

Our guess is that corporal punishment will not be reintroduced on this occasion. These things tend to be put forward and discussed many times—often for years—before any actual change is made, but the very fact that the subject is back on the agenda for consideration represents a shift almost inconceivable a few years ago.

Worries over the practicalities centre round the issue of whether it will even be possible for teachers to cane the young thugs most in need of it. As *The Mail on Sunday* comments, reporting the new proposals: "How are teachers in mixed schools going to cope with tear-aways who steal and burgle after school and who have had more than one brush with the police? Attempts to administer punishment might end in teachers being assaulted, followed, their homes petrol bombed." The paper points out that "in some schools, truancy rates, classroom disruption, playground bullying, even assaults on teaching staff have now reached terrifying levels" and notes that in the same week as these proposals were made a teacher was awarded £95,000 by the Criminal Injuries Compensation board after she had been left permanently disabled by an attack perpetrated by a female pupil.

The picture is clearly not simply one of a dysfunctional educational system, but of a dysfunctional society; and it is equally clear that while corporal punishment may be part of the answer, it would be ineffective in the absence of a much wider and more general reform of society, an end to the crude ugliness and cult of pseudo-rebellion propagated by all the mass media, and a return to civilised values: dignity, decency, neatness, order, conscience and respect.

# *A Framework for the Future*

## ***In general***

- Corporal punishment should be used as a last resort.
- Corporal punishment should be used only for the most serious offences.
- ‘Dangerous’ punishments should be discouraged. In particular, the practice of caning girls across the hand risks damage to delicate bones and should be replaced, either by caning across the bottom or by using a strap or similar ‘soft’ implement across the hand.
- Corporal punishment should not be used for a first offence, unless the offence is very serious indeed.

## ***Avoiding abuse***

- The *In Loco Parentis* ruling should be strictly enforced under the law, with greatly increased penalties for the abuse of corporal punishment.
- Punishment should be carried out by a person of the same sex.
- In particular, men should not be allowed to administer corporal punishment to girls.
- Another teacher, preferably the child’s form teacher, should be present during the punishment to ensure that it is administered properly.
- Scrupulous records should be kept of all corporal punishments administered, and these should be available for inspection by governors, parents and other interested parties.

## ***Fairness to the pupil***

- Pupils should know which offences they are likely to receive corporal punishment for.
- There should be consistency between schools: precedents should be established and lists published so there are national guidelines on what are and are not acceptable uses of corporal punishment.

- Schools should be encouraged to offer pupils the choice between corporal punishment and temporary suspension or other non-corporal punishments.
- Children should have the right of appeal: they should be allowed, if they so wish, to present their case to another teacher or panel of teachers.
- Pupils should be treated alike: girls should not expect to ‘get away’ with offences that boys are punished for.

### ***Fairness to the parents***

- Parents who disapprove strongly of corporal punishment should be allowed, at the start of their children’s school careers, either to exempt their children from it, or, if this is felt to be detrimental to school discipline, to move them to another school.









